Duquesne University

THE JUNIOR PLAY BOOK

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CONTENTS

PAGE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS v

READING PLAYS, A FOREWORD TO GIRLS AND BOYS . xi

FRANK BETTS

Introduction 3

The Passing of Sinfiotli 11

STEPHEN PHILLIPS

Introduction 45

Ulysses 55

ELMA EHRLICH LEVINGER

Introduction 125

Jephthah's Daughter 131

T. B. ROGERS

Introduction 161

The Forfeit 163

BOOTH TARKINGTON

Introduction 193

The Trysting Place 197

CLIFFORD BAX

Introduction 228

Square Pegs 233

DOUGLAS HYDE

Introduction 248

The Twisting of the Rope 255

PAGE

MILES MALLESON

Introduction 268
Paddly Pools 271

ALICE ROSTETTER

Introduction 285
The Queen's Lost Dignity 293

HAROLD BRIGHOUSE

Introduction 345
Followers 349

LAURENCE HOUSMAN

Introduction 365
Brother Sun 373

TO TEACHERS 385

DESIGNS

FACING PAGE

THE PASSING OF SINFIOTLI: Hall of Sigmund . . 38

ULYSSES: Reunion of Penelope and Ulysses 116

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER: The Return of Jephthah . 140

THE TRYSTING PLACE: The Guilty Chairs 216

SQUARE PEGS: Inside Merlin's Gate 238

THE TWISTING OF THE ROPE: The Closing Door . . 260

PADDLY POOLS: A Group on the Other Side 276

BROTHER SUN: Saint Francis Before the Soldan . . . 379

READING PLAYS

A FOREWORD TO BOYS AND GIRLS

All the plays in this volume were written in the twentieth century. All of them were intended to be acted on the stage before an audience. They have been printed in order that they may also be read—be read for pleasure, just as you turn to a novel or to a short story for entertainment.

Some of you may live in villages; some of you in the largest city in the United States; but whether in town or country, you will know from the conversation at home, at church, and in school, and from the monthly and weekly magazines, that there has rarely been a time when people have been so generally interested in the drama as they are at the present moment. In the big centres of population, there are many theatres where elaborate productions of plays of all kinds are given by professional companies under expert direction; but there is hardly a hamlet where the Little Theatre movement has not taken root. In North Dakota and North Carolina, under the leadership of the State universities, the students of those institutions are presenting to their communities plays made out of the very fabric of local history and every-day life, but the country theatre movement is not confined to these two states.

In order to take an intelligent part in the social life of the place where you live, you will have to learn in high school to read plays appreciatively as a preparation for becoming an intelligent audience in your local theatre, and also as a preparation for further reading in the

drama. It is easier to begin your acquaintance with drama by reading modern writers. Their language is easy to understand, they look at problems of life and conduct in much the same way that you do, and even where their subject matter is taken from the past, they handle it from a present-day viewpoint.

In connection with your study of novels, short stories, ballads, and other forms of narrative, you have doubtless learned something about the way a story marches forward to a climax; how authors keep you sitting on the anxious seat almost to the very end of the story; how finally situations straighten themselves out, or straighten themselves out by refusing to be straightened out at all. You will discover that the authors of the plays in this volume employ much the same devices in the construction of plays as the writers of other narrative forms of literature do.

I hope that you will watch just how the thing is done; that reading plays will make you see dramatic possibilities in various kinds of story material; that reading these plays will make you closer students of human nature, so that you may find, whether you turn to literature or to life, material for dramatic treatment lying richly to hand. One of the most amusing things in the world to do is to experiment with literary forms. Not every one who tries his hand at a play becomes a playwright, but it is perfectly safe to say that any one who has himself or herself tried to compress the stuff of life or literature into dramatic mold will have a much surer and more sensitive appreciation of dramatic art than one who has never made the experiment.

You will notice that some of the questions under Suggestions for Study deal with methods of production. These questions are put so that you may begin thinking

about the best way of producing plays, may watch the newspapers and magazines for accounts of novel and artistic methods of setting and lighting the stage, and may see the close relationship between the kind of play and the kind of design which that play demands for a background. But more than anything else in the world, this collection is made to give you as many pleasant half hours as possible. You will notice that most of the words and names that you need to understand in order to enjoy the plays have been explained in the Word Lists in the various Introductions. By this plan, you will be saved hurried visits to dictionary and encyclopædia, when all you want to do is to sit down and read till your eyes meet the word " Curtain."

HELEN LOUISE COHEN.

THE PASSING OF SINFIOTLI *

By

FRANK BETTS

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INTRODUCTION

THE PASSING OF SINFIOTLI[1]

The Passing of Sinfiotli, by Frank Betts, was published first in England in 1917 in a volume called *Saga Plays.* They are so called because their plots are based on stories found in the sagas, and their characters are, for the most part, personages from the same source. The plot of this particular play is found in outline in the *Volsunga Saga,* which relates the fortunes of the house of King Volsung. Volsung had ten sons, the oldest of whom was Sigmund, and one daughter, Signy. She was married to Siggeir, king of the Goths, who treacherously slew her father and all of her brothers except Sigmund. After this bloody betrayal, Signy strove in every way to avenge their death. Finally, through the aid of a witch, she and Sigmund brought into the world a son, Sinfiotli by name, who aided his father to do away with Siggeir. In the flames lighted by Sigmund and Sinfiotli, that destroyed the royal hall of the Goths and in which Siggeir perished, Signy by her own will also found death. After that adventure, Sigmund made Borghild his wife, the very Borghild who is the heroine of Frank Betts's play. In the *Volsunga Saga,* as it has been translated into English from the Icelandic by Eiríkr Magnússon and William Morris, the events outlined in this play are thus recounted:

THE ENDING OF SINFJOTLI, SIGMUND'S SON

Now the Volsungs fare back home, and have gained great renown by these deeds. But Sinfjotli betook himself to war-

[1] Pronounced sin-fyĕ-ot'li.

fare anew; and therewith he had sight of an exceeding fair woman, and yearned above all things for her; but that same woman was wooed also of the brother of Borghild, the king's wife: and this matter they fought out betwixt them, and Sinfjotli slew that king; and thereafter he harried far and wide, and had many a battle and ever gained the day; and he became hereby honoured and renowned above all men; but in autumn tide he came home with many ships and abundant wealth.

Then he told his tidings to the king his father, and he again to the queen, and she for her part bids him get him gone from the realm, and made as if she would in nowise see him. But Sigmund said he would not drive him away, and offered her atonement of gold and great wealth for her brother's life, albeit he said he had never erst given weregild [1] to any for the slaying of a man, but no fame it was to uphold wrong against a woman.

So seeing she might not get her own way herein, she said, "Have thy will in this matter, O my lord, for it is seemly so to be."

And now she holds the funeral feast for her brother by the aid and counsel of the king, and makes ready all things therefor in the best of wise, and bade thither many great men.

At that feast, Borghild the queen bare the drink to folk, and she came over against Sinfjotli with a great horn, and said—

"Fall to now and drink, fair stepson!"

Then he took the horn to him, and looked therein, and said—

"Nay, for the drink is charmed drink."

Then said Sigmund, "Give it unto me then;" and therewith he took the horn and drank it off.

But the queen said to Sinfjotli, "Why must other men needs drink thine ale for thee?" And she came again the second time with the horn, and said, "Come now and drink!" and goaded him with many words.

[1] Weregild, fine for man-slaying (*wer,* man, and *gild,* a payment).

And he took the horn, and said—

"Guile is in the drink."

And thereon, Sigmund cried out—

"Give it then unto me!"

Again, the third time, she came to him, and bade him drink off his drink, if he had the heart of a Volsung; then he laid hand on the horn, but said—

"Venom is therein."

"Nay, let the lip strain it out then, O son," quoth Sigmund; and by then was he exceeding drunk with drink, and therefore spake he in that wise.

So Sinfjotli drank, and straightway fell down dead to the ground.

Sigmund rose up, and sorrowed nigh to death over him; then he took the corpse in his arms and fared away to the woods, and went till he came to a certain firth; and there he saw a man in a little boat; and that man asked if he would be wafted by him over the firth, and he said yea thereto; but so little was the boat, that they might not all go in at once, so the corpse was first laid therein, while Sigmund went by the firth-side. But therewith the boat and the man therein vanished away from before Sigmund's eyes.[1]

So thereafter Sigmund turned back home, and drove away the queen, and a little after she died. But Sigmund the king yet ruled his realm, and is deemed ever the greatest champion and king of the old law.

The *Volsunga Saga* is a later prose version of the story that had wide currency among the early Germanic peoples and which is treated in many different lays in the *Elder Edda,* a collection of ancient Icelandic poems on mythological subjects, dating mainly from the tenth and eleventh centuries. The history of the Volsungs is referred to in *Beowulf* and in other old English poems, and one branch of it is treated fully in the great medieval epic

[1] The man in the boat is Odin, doubtless.

of Germany, the *Niebelungenlied*. Sixty years ago Richard Wagner utilized parts of these same tales in four great music dramas. Unlike most composers, he wrote the texts as well as the music of these four operas based on the *Niebelungenlied*. Their names are *The Rhinegold, The Valkyries, Siegfried,* and *The Dusk of the Gods.*

Mr. Betts, explaining his use of the saga material, has said: "The detail is in no way based on archæological study. I roughly put my people half way up the Norway coast in say somewhere near 800 and then filled in my geography and archæology by ear, so to speak. The mythological background happened up in the woods and mountains, and there is a warm, rich world across the sea, and the detail is any scraps one can pick up within a century or so either way which do not seem utterly incongruous."

WORD LIST

Asgard, the home of the gods of the North. Pronounced as'gärd.
Baldur, god of sun and summer. For his story see (1) H. A. Guerber, *Myths of the Norsemen,* pp. 197-215; (2) Matthew Arnold, *Balder Dead.*
bane, murderer.
barrow, a mound of earth or stones erected in early times over a grave.
byrnie, a coat of mail.
cairn, a pyramid of rough stones.
Caithness, a county of northern Scotland.
cot carles, men who lurk in their huts, afraid to seek battle.
doom, decree, sentence.
Earl Sigurd, one of the Viking conquerors of Scotland. Pronounced sĭ gōōrd.
ernes, eagles.
garth, a small piece of enclosed ground, usually beside a house.
Gram, the sword which Odin thrust into the tree Branstock, in Volsung's hall, the night of the wedding feast of Signy and Siggeir. The Allfather in so doing spoke these words: "Whoso draweth this sword from this stock, shall have the same as a gift from me, and shall find in good sooth that never bare he better sword in hand than is this." To Siggeir's disgust, it was

Sigmund and not he who was able to withdraw Gram from the Branstock.

Kesar, emperor.

Langness, an island off the coast of Denmark.

louvre, a long window-like opening to supply an outlet for smoke.

may, a maiden.

Micklegard, Constantinople.

Norns, goddesses of Fate. They personified the past, present, and future. They were visited frequently by such gods as desired to consult them. They refused to reveal to Odin or to the other gods what their end would be. They wove mighty webs and sang as they threw the shuttle.

Odin, the Allfather, the chief god of the Northern races, god of universal wisdom, lover of battles, protector of heroes. Other forms of his name were Wuotan and Woden. From him Wednesday (Woden's day) was named. He had but one eye, his other having been given in exchange for a draught from Mimer's well, the source of all knowledge. Pronounced ō'din.

Osric, a Viking invader of Ireland.

Ran, the goddess of death for those who perished at sea. In her coral bowers beneath the waves, the drowned banqueted as in Valhalla.

runes, the signs of the earliest alphabet used by Northern nations, at least as old as the third century. Their invention was attributed to Odin. Actually, "when the English still lived in their continental homes, they shared with the neighboring kindred tribes an alphabet which may well be described as the national Germanic alphabet, since there is evidence that it was used throughout the Germanic territory, both in the outposts of Scandinavia and in the countries watered by the Rhine and the Danube." (*The Cambridge History of English Literature.*)

sackless, blameless.

shield-burg, bulwark or defense formed by interlocking shields.

Siggeir, king of the Goths, husband of Signy. Siggeir, having treacherously slain Volsung and his sons, meets death when his royal hall is burned down in vengeance by Sigmund and Sinfiotli. For the story in full, see H. A. Guerber, *Myths of the Norsemen,* pp. 251-267. Pronounced sig'gīr.

Signy, daughter of Volsung, wife of Siggeir, and mother of Sinfiotli. Pronounced sig'ni.

skald, Scandinavian minstrel poet.

stead, place; found in the play as the second element in names of houses, as Thorolfstead; *cf.* modern homestead.

thrall, a slave or serf; a servant or subject.

Valkyrs, maidens sent by Odin to hover over the battlefields, pick up the slain heroes, and transport them to Valhalla. These girls, mounted on fair horses, rode shouting and hallooing through the skies.

Viking, a warlike pirate or sea-rover (eighth to eleventh century).

West-over-sea, the British Isles.

Wick, one of the chief towns in Caithness.
wolf's head, outlaw.

FOR SUPPLEMENTARY READING

Matthew Arnold, *Balder Dead.*
S. Baring, *The Story of Grettir the Strong,* New York, 1902.
A. F. Brown, *In the Days of Giants,* Boston and New York, 1902.
Padraic Colum, *The Children of Odin.* Illustrations by Willy Pogany. New York, 1920.
H. A. Guerber, *Myths of Northern Lands,* New York, 1895.
H. A. Guerber, *Myths of the Norsemen,* London, 1908.
William Henry Frost, *The Wagner Story Book (The Stolen Treasure),* New York, 1897. A simple version.
J. R. C. Hall, *Beowulf.* (Notice pictures in this edition. Read especially the description of Heorot, the royal hall, and of the banquet held to honor Beowulf.) Cambridge, 1914.
A. and E. Keary, *The Heroes of Asgard,* New York, 1906.
John Masefield, *The Locked Chest* in *The Locked Chest and The Sweeps of Ninety-Eight,* New York, 1917.
A. Mawer, *The Vikings.* Cambridge, 1913. (Contains some interesting pictures.)
William Morris, *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung,* New York, Bombay, and Calcutta, 1914.
Z. A. Ragozin, *Frithjof, the Viking of Norway, and Roland, the Paladin of France,* New York, 1899.
Jóhann Sigurjónsson, *Modern Icelandic Plays: Eyvind of the Hills, The Hraun Farm,* New York, 1916.
Evelyn Smith, *Form-Room Plays, Junior Book (Thor's Hammer; The Death of Balder),* The Kings Treasuries of Literature Series, New York, London and Toronto.
W. E. Sparkes, *Sigurd and Gudrun,* Boston.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

What is the "antecedent material" of the play?

At what point in Act I do "things begin to happen"?

Outline the plot in three sentences, no one of which shall contain more than thirty words.

The conflict in this play is between what two forces or ideas?

Describe an evening's entertainment in the royal hall of Sigmund.

Invent a dialogue between Sigmund and Odin, to be spoken just before Sinfiotli's body is carried away in the little boat.

In the style of the saga, recount some episode in Borghild's girlhood.

What part of the history of our language is illustrated in this play?

Tell the story of Sigurd, Fafnirsbane, known also as Siegfried.

Discuss substitutes for the skald in modern life.

Compare the ideals of conduct of the Northmen as suggested in this saga play with those ideals presented in the *Odyssey*.

What is the theme of *The Passing of Sinfiotli?*

How is the spirit of the play conveyed in the design for Sigmund's Hall?

CHARACTERS

SIGMUND, *King of the Volsungs.*
SINFIOTLI, *his Son.*
HAMDIR, *his Brother-in-law.*
HERVARD, *and other Earls.*
EYOLF, THORSTEIN } *Comrades of Sinfiotli.*
HJALLI, ODD } *Thralls.*
BORGHILD, *Wife of Sigmund.*
GUNNHILD, *a Widow: Mistress of Thorolfstead.*
THORA, *Borghild's Foster Sister and Attendant.*
LJOD, *Gunnhild's Maid.*

SCENES:—ACT I. *Thorolfstead: an upland Farm near Nidaross.*
ACTS II & III. *Sigmund's Hall at Nidaross.*

Time: The Viking Age.

ἐπεὶ νύ τοι αἶσα μίννυθά περ, οὔτι μάλα δήν.[1]
Iliad, A. 416.

[1] "Seeing thy lot is very brief and endureth no long while."

THE PASSING OF SINFIOTLI

ACT I

THOROLFSTEAD. *An upland farm. In the far distance a fiord and glimpse of the sea. To the right a pine wood—visible behind it a farmhouse.*

GUNNHILD *is a dark-haired woman of about 27. She looks down a path to the left. She is simply dressed, her only ornament a brooch at the throat, a silver circle with a ring of gold and a boss of red enamel.*

Enter from the left LJOD—*out of breath with a climb. She is tall, gold-haired, fragile. Probably consumptive.*

LJOD. I have not seen him.

GUNNHILD. You have not seen him?

LJOD. No. I spoke to Eyolf. I made sure he would come. I gave Eyolf part of your word.

GUNNHILD. Could you not speak to Sinfiotli?

LJOD. He was at the smithy. All the men were at the smithy. Kjartan was finishing a great sword for Sinfiotli. Great as Gram, the sword Odin gave to Sigmund. There was awe in the heart even of Kjartan, who is smithying the death edges every day, as the sword grew terrible under the hammer.

GUNNHILD. Stark sword for stark smiter. But the glory is not in the sword. It is the king folk set the flame on the edges, and the magic in the runes. All swords are stark in his hands.

LJOD. They were all at the smithy. I dared not go to Sinfiotli. Hjalli was near the door. I am afraid he saw me. He would tell Thora, or the Queen. Men say he sees all things and the wraith of the battle-doomed and hears the sound of swords before the smiting. I fear a foresighted man.

GUNNHILD. Was not Eyolf at the smithy?

LJOD. He was going. I met him. Sinfiotli will come.

GUNNHILD. What did you tell Eyolf?

LJOD. I fear Sinfiotli. His eyes are quick as a blow. And colder than steel. . . .

GUNNHILD [*looking keenly at her*]. What new craft of yours, Ljod?

LJOD. He may love you a little, between a hearth murder and a faring overseas: but he loves another better. The blue steel. Cold as the sea breaking on the floes. He loves the steel best.

GUNNHILD. Eyolf you may fool, Ljod, and Sinfiotli you think you are able to tangle with lying words. But I will have the truth. What did you tell Eyolf?

LJOD. Sinfiotli would perhaps come for your eyes, lady. But I said Hamdir was coming to Thorolfstead and boasted he would not brook Sinfiotli. I thought to add that he called him a vile name. But it's often a word too many will spoil a fair tale. He will come.

GUNNHILD. I grudge that you should speak against his honour. Let him come without your taunting, or let him abide.

LJOD. I strove to bring your will to pass, lady, as I might. There is none of them, not the fieriest lover, but should come to sword strokes before kisses, if he have any heart in his breast. So, by your saying, it should be with the man you love.

GUNNHILD. And I love Sinfiotli?

LJOD. Your eyes say it, and your voice, lady. For me, I could not love the son of Sigmund. Not even were I of the queen folk. His heart is cold . . . as his sword.

GUNNHILD. Whether I love him or no . . . he is not like the other kings. Cot carles. They strive bravely when they are drunken. Sigmund, they say, was a man once . . .

LJOD. Cot carle or king, I mind my father's saying—cold the heart that ale cannot warm. I ask no such lover.

GUNNHILD. Ljod, you are content amid the milk pails. A

little gossip and a lie to please you, and a meeting beside the wedge of hawthorn or in the pine-wood. I am weary of the homefield and the gossipers. I am weary of the stream, roaring in spring with broken snow, a trickle in autumn amid the stones. Homefield and byre and the cackle of neighbours—and your lies also, Ljod. My tryst shall be between the rollers of the sea. Not for a trinket will I sell my kisses, as you, Ljod. My price is great strokes and a long ship aflame over a battle-smitten earl. And, maybe, a crown more red than the battle dew of the striving for the spoil.

LJOD. O, Sinfiotli may well pay such a bride price. And yet, for the tryst, you meet at the edge of the pine wood . . . [*enter* HAMDIR] . . . with Sinfiotli—or perchance, Hamdir. . . . [GUNNHILD *turns*—LJOD *slips out.* HAMDIR *is two or three and twenty, a well-set-up, ingenuous youth. He is flushed and eager.* GUNNHILD *looks at him and turns deliberately away.*]

HAMDIR. Greeting, Gunnhild. [GUNNHILD *does not answer.* HAMDIR *waits irresolute. After a long pause.*]

GUNNHILD. The old errand, Hamdir?

HAMDIR. The old errand.

GUNNHILD. And the old answer.

HAMDIR. Is the love of a king's son so light, Gunnhild?

GUNNHILD. O, they are kings in Westerdale, and the love of the deedless is always light.

HAMDIR. Sigmund was deedless once; and I am not altogether deedless, Gunnhild. I helped beat off the raiders in Westerdale a year ago. Osric and Heimdar from Halgoland. Before Sigmund bade me hither with Borghild. I have crossed swords—

GUNNHILD. A raid beaten off—cudgel play with cow-stealers rather than swords.

HAMDIR. Love me, Gunnhild. A fine swordsman is a proud housemate—but passionate and ill to build up the homestead. And I will sail West-over-sea in the Spring. It is too late this year. My mother's cousin will be fitting out a long ship from the Wick.

GUNNHILD. Do a deed and I will hearken you, Hamdir. But it must be a king's deed. And then I do not promise to love you.

HAMDIR. Name your deed.

GUNNHILD [*walking away*]. O, I cannot set a man's heart in your breast. Nor the wit of a Viking. I am weary of you and your prating. Dwell with old Sigmund, who grows childish and speaks soft words, and the Queen, your sister. And find a wife from the lowland farms. Be at ease and build up a homestead—garner and store—feed full and sleep soft—and awake in the dark to find fire in the gables and steel in the doorway. The Viking shall divide the spoil. [SINFIOTLI *enters unnoticed and waits among the pines, motionless. He is a tall man of thirty or thereabouts—dark-haired and a little haggard. All his movements, and even his glances, are very swift and abrupt.* HAMDIR, *utterly cast down at first, rallies.*]

HAMDIR. Hjalli told me you were wild-hearted. Gunnhild, Gunnhild, hearken me. It were better for you than this upland desert, to wed me and dwell by the fiord mouth. And since you desire deeds and the praise of the skalds . . .

GUNNHILD. How should your name be in their mouth?

HAMDIR. Next spring I will fare overseas. And perhaps the Norns will send me back with praise and spoil. I am not a cot carle, Gunnhild, indeed . . . or if you have a deed in your heart . . .

GUNNHILD [*catching sight of* SINFIOTLI—*after a very short pause*]. There is a deed to your hand.

HAMDIR [*lights up, looks round and sees* SINFIOTLI. *He is undaunted*]. I . . . do not understand, Gunnhild.

GUNNHILD. I said you had not the heart or the wit of a Viking, Hamdir. You do not understand, and you are afraid. [HAMDIR *looks steadily at* SINFIOTLI. SINFIOTLI *does not move.* HAMDIR *half turns aside and bites his lip. He grips his sword hilt convulsively. There is a pause.*] Go home, Hamdir, before Sinfiotli slay you.

HAMDIR [*aside*]. Hjalli told me her heart was like a sword.

GUNNHILD. Go home, Hamdir, before Sinfiotli slay you.

HAMDIR. The death of Thorolf her man, and the death of Snorri Gunnarson, and another death to-day.

GUNNHILD. Go home, Hamdir, before Sinfiotli slay you.

HAMDIR [*suddenly*]. I will strive with Sinfiotli since you will have it so. We are not cowards in Westerdale.

SINFIOTLI [*advancing*]. Greeting, Hamdir. You are not cowards in Westerdale. But we will not strive to-day, you and I.

HAMDIR [*absolutely dauntless and cheerful*]. Greeting, Sinfiotli. Greeting of friends before the swords meet.

SINFIOTLI. Our swords need not meet, Hamdir. I do not think you are doomed to stand over my body. Either to-day or any other day. And it is ill for a brave man to seek his own death.

HAMDIR. She has set me my deed. O Sinfiotli, son of Sigurd, bane of Siggeir, very sword of Odin, I know you and your battle craft. I have not fared overseas and pulled down kings and smitten at the gates of Micklegard. I think this will be my only battle. But none knows the purpose of the Norns, before the iron stands in the heart of the slain. And I swear to you, Sinfiotli, that if I am fated to live and not you, then death and hell shall take hold of this woman. Albeit I love her. I swear it, Sinfiotli.

SINFIOTLI. I am not deemed backward, when men call me to the sword play. But, Hamdir, why seek your death? Let this woman go and her striving for the death of men. Neither I nor any deem you a coward. She sent her maid to me with lies. . . .

GUNNHILD. The lies were her own.

SINFIOTLI. I would not strive with you, Hamdir. The High Gods set a fire in the hearts of some, to seek death on the seas, and under the walls of great cities, for the sake of spoil, or the songs of skalds, or maybe, for the sake of the fire itself. Yet this burns not in your heart, as in mine: and yet I hold you a man. Go home, live long and happy and play the man when war comes of its own will.

GUNNHILD. I bade you live like a cot carle, Hamdir. But

do not ask me to share a carle's lot. I am already weary of it. It may be you will find content therein.

HAMDIR. You have spoken like a king, Sinfiotli. Indeed the Norns set not in my heart the love of death. But they lit another flame—the love of this woman. Though she be a knife for the slaying. In the end it is the same thing. Except that the skalds remember you and your deeds. [*He draws slowly.*]

SINFIOTLI. Put back the steel, Hamdir. There is that in my breast answers its shining. And the eyes of Gunnhild . . . but I do not desire your death.

HAMDIR. Sinfiotli, a man may well be foresighted in his last hour. And I think I am speaking the words of a foresighted man. Your death . . . and not mine only. It is not of my seeking, Sinfiotli. Gunnhild would be as the Norns: but the driving is not hers. I cannot draw back. [HAMDIR *steps back, pauses and leaps.* SINFIOTLI *draws like a flash, parries, avoids, and slashes backhand as* HAMDIR *passes him.* HAMDIR *falls.* GUNNHILD *laughs.*]

SINFIOTLI. You ask a deed, Gunnhild. And you have your price.

GUNNHILD [*with an effort*]. Better he should die like a man. [GUNNHILD *bends over* HAMDIR, *who is still. She draws herself up with a shudder.*]

SINFIOTLI. What ailed you to egg the lad to his slaying?

GUNNHILD [*forcing herself*]. Sinfiotli, I am weary of these wooers. And he would take no answer . . . [*she nearly breaks down, takes another line*] are you now daunted for a manslaying? . . . [*desperately trying to be understood*] Son of Sigmund, I know you . . . no common slayer . . . no wolf's head in the woods . . . like a wild beast . . . there is more in your heart than violence and the rending of shields. Have I done ill in your eyes, Sinfiotli?

SINFIOTLI. You have done what was appointed, Gunnhild.

GUNNHILD. I held you wise, Sinfiotli. Do you not know what the kings, and the idle queen folk, and the skalds who know all things, and even old Sigmund know not, that the

light of the sun, laughter and dancing, peace and a harvest overflowing the garners, and Spring racing down the south-west wind, that all these are lies? There are three things that never cheat their lover—the shining of swords, the surf driven by the storm, and the venture snatched at beyond man's reach, with death at the end. Thou and I only in all Thrandheim have this bitter wisdom. Signy knew it.

SINFIOTLI. No word of Signy to-day.

GUNNHILD. What wrong have I done Hamdir? Those dogs yonder sleep out life till their death day. He at least saw the swords flicker in a hopeless battle. Were I an earl I would ask nothing better. . . . What more do you ask, Sinfiotli?

SINFIOTLI. I ask no more, Gunnhild.

GUNNHILD. Thou and I are mates, Sinfiotli. We understand.

SINFIOTLI. He had a man's heart. And you egged him to his death.

GUNNHILD. Sinfiotli broods over his slain!

SINFIOTLI. There is no taunt in your heart. Why taunt with your lips? For you partly understand.

GUNNHILD. O, we are mates, you and I. Take me, son of Sigurd. Take me from this house. I grow wild here . . . and hateful. I cannot bear it—the silly chatter of the farming folk and the lies. They hate me . . . because I have dreams . . . and because . . . O, the long desolate winter, Sinfiotli . . . I cannot bear it . . . I am eating my heart, day after day. Overseas . . .

SINFIOTLI [*with a smile*]. Hard faring with Vikings. And rough weather now and again.

GUNNHILD. I care not, I care not.

SINFIOTLI. Ran's net is always spread. And little ease if we escape her. They fire the beacons when they see our long ship from the headlands. Stakes in the rivers and spears at the landings and the country-side aflame. Ill faring even for a brave woman.

GUNNHILD. I care not! Overseas.

SINFIOTLI [*still smiling*]. No truce, no rest. Some have fared with me, strong lads and sons of earls, who had fain seen the home mead again, high above the fiord. And the cattle pens, for all they smell of dung.

GUNNHILD. O, cannot you understand? I am strong, and O, I am not afraid. Ran's net or the sword on the throat. Summer and winter, chatter at the fair and the desert of snow —I am weary. And base folk . . . and they hate me, Sinfiotli. Take me.

SINFIOTLI. Do you think, Gunnhild, that you alone find these things a weariness? But the same fire burns here and West-over-sea. The Norns kindled the fire.

GUNNHILD [*faintly*]. Take me, Sinfiotli.

SINFIOTLI. If I pulled down the Lords of London and made you a kingdom, as Osric did in Ireland, or Earl Sigurd at Wick in Caithness, do you think you would find content? Crowned and clad in silk. And for one handmaid fifty. I think you would be weary in your pride.

GUNNHILD [*half-choking*]. I love you, Sinfiotli.

SINFIOTLI. I do not think peace is to be won, Gunnhild. I also would find peace. The Norns set fire in our hearts.

GUNNHILD. Cheat the Norns. To-day and to-morrow I would fain lie as Hamdir, so I may live for a moment, as he lived, under your falling sword.

SINFIOTLI. The Norns are ill to cheat. They dwell in lofty places. And the ernes scream around their heads. They are cold and weary. Weary of life and time. They envy us a hearth flame.

GUNNHILD. Let me live for an hour, Sinfiotli. And the sea may have me after.

SINFIOTLI. They envy us, Gunnhild. They have set a fire in our hearts, to burn up our peace. In the end they will loose wild fire on the world, if by any means they may warm their hands at the blaze. Their hands and their hearts.

GUNNHILD [*despairingly*]. We are mates, you and I, Sinfiotli. And we have the same fire in our hearts. For an hour

SINFIOTLI [*to himself—looking at* HAMDIR]. A destroying fire.

GUNNHILD [*with a flash*]. In yours also, destruction!

SINFIOTLI. In mine also. And Hamdir lies between us. Their swords for his slaying. And the fools yonder [*he points to the fiord*] praise and blame. They would be wiser than Odin and more crafty. They would mould life and time as Kjartan forges a sword. And the iron of the Norns is too hard for any men's forging.

GUNNHILD. There are other dead than Hamdir, by your hand . . . and mine.

SINFIOTLI. I know not how or why. But they slew him by our hands and set his blood like a river between us. I have crossed seas on a light errand . . . but this is more deep and wide than all the waters from here to Micklegard. It is farewell, Gunnhild.

ACT II

The Hall of SIGMUND—*to the left a low dais with a table. To the right is a door with a porch leading thence into the open air. There is a door to the left rear. Along the front of the stage are a number of small hearths. There is a High Seat with pillars in the middle of the back wall. The place is dimly lighted from louvres in the roof. The back wall is covered with tapestry. There are benches along the walls.* ODD, HJALLI *and* THORA *are talking near the outer door.* THORA *is very upright—she wears a silver pendant and a silver bracelet—her features are clear-cut and tragic looking—but on close inspection she is not so queen-like as she seems at first.* ODD *is short, red-haired, freckled, and frightened.* HJALLI *is a tall man of forty-five, aquiline, and haggard.*

THORA. ANOTHER manslaying at Thorolfstead?

ODD. A dreadful deed . . . Sinfiotli.

THORA. Wolf, son of a wolf.

HJALLI. We are all wolves when a woman laughs at the bared edges.

ODD. Sinfiotli came into the homefield. We looked up, we thralls . . . there was that in his bearing that meant tidings.

THORA [*shuddering*]. Who is slain?

ODD. And he cried out—I proclaim a manslaying, at Thorolfstead, at my hands.

THORA. Snorri Gunnarson went West-over-sea . . .

HJALLI [*with a touch of sympathy*]. A year ago . . . all but three weeks.

THORA. Snorri Gunnarson went West-over-sea . . . I think Sinfiotli will sail for Micklegard. Ran's net is always spread.

HJALLI [*quietly*]. Who is the slain?

ODD. We are afraid . . . the others would neither meddle nor make in the matter of Sinfiotli's slayings. So he took the path to the fiord. And after I came hither.

THORA [*with a cry*]. Who is the slain?

ODD [*suddenly cowed*]. I am afraid.

THORA. Tell me, Odd. I also am afraid.

HJALLI. Is it the Queen's brother, Odd? [*Silence.*]

THORA. I would have Thorolfstead burned to ashes.

ODD [*very low*]. I have brought ill-luck with my tidings. And I am Sigmund's man.

THORA. Hjalli, had you tidings?

HJALLI. Men hold me weatherwise, Thora, in the matter of storms. But this guessing would not tax a foresighted man.

THORA. Thorolfstead should be burned with fire.

HJALLI. Fire enough at Thorolfstead.

THORA. Snorri Gunnarson went West-over-sea. They say Thorolf sleeps ill in his cairn. And Snorri was wrecked near the Orkneys.

HJALLI. A perilous water, the Pentland. And a deadly coast. The reefs are like sword edges.

THORA. There are other waters and other reefs between here and Micklegard, Hjalli. Reef and sand and wrath of the open sea. Thorolf in his cairn unquiet . . . Snorri taken in Ran's net . . . Hamdir slain in the bracken and the son of Sigmund . . . I would burn Thorolfstead with fire.

ODD. Who will tell the Queen?

THORA. They sent you with the tidings, Odd.

ODD. I . . . dare not face the Queen, Thora.

THORA. O, he is a wolf . . . the skalds said it in Westerdale. And the son of a wolf.

HJALLI. Sigmund wrought Odin's will. And he bears the sword Odin gave. For Odin's battles. Never a wolf.

THORA. They were wood dwellers once and wolves, he and Sinfiotli. Before they burned King Siggeir in his house. And Sinfiotli is a wolf to this hour. And the rest is lies. [*She crosses the room towards the left and pauses at door.*] I will tell the Queen, Odd. [*A step is heard outside*—THORA

pauses. Enter LJOD—*very frightened. She looks round timidly.* THORA *glares at her. Pause.*]

ODD. Tidings from Thorolfstead?

LJOD [*blankly*]. Who has told? . . . I have no tidings.

ODD. No tidings of King's son and Queen's brother, Ljod? For one of them has declared a manslaying in our home-field.

THORA. You may speak. You, at least shall depart unharmed.

LJOD. Yes . . . I had tidings . . . Queen's brother and King's son.

ODD. And you saw the slaying?

LJOD. No, not the slaying . . . not the slaying. I have seen the slain.

THORA. You must bring the news to Borghild, Ljod.

LJOD. No . . . no . . . I cannot face the Queen.

HJALLI. What brought you then to Thorolfstead?

THORA. You shall tell the Queen, Ljod. I think you and Gunnhild plotted the blow.

LJOD. I did not plot it. And I cannot face Queen Borghild. She thinks ill of us at Thorolfstead. Thora . . . I cannot tell her.

THORA. I never laid a snare yet, but I do not think I should blench after the blow. Neither in my own cause or another's.

ODD [*awed*]. Where was the slaying?

HJALLI. Ljod did not share in the plot. I think Gunnhild alone enough for the slaying of Hamdir.

THORA. Gunnhild and Sinfiotli.

HJALLI. It is you must tell Borghild, Thora.

ODD. I would not face Borghild with Hamdir's blood on my hands.

LJOD. There is no blood on my hands, no blood on my hands . . . unless when I lifted the dead. . . .

HJALLI. Who sent you hither, Ljod?

LJOD. I came for help . . . to bring the dead to the house, Hjalli.

ODD [*in a whisper*]. Have they left him lying, Ljod?

LJOD. In the bracken . . . where he fell. . . .

THORA. Little they reck of the slain at Thorolfstead.

LJOD. The thralls were south, on the hills . . . I could not lift Hamdir alone.

HJALLI. Where does he lie?

LJOD. I was talking to Gunnhild . . . at the edge of the pine wood . . . you know the pines on the high ground.

HJALLI. We know the pines, Ljod.

ODD [*in a whisper*]. They found Thorolf under the pines.

LJOD. And then Hamdir came . . . I left them . . . they were talking like lovers.

HJALLI. You are lying, Ljod.

LJOD. I am not lying . . . I turned to the home mead. As I entered the garth I looked round. They were talking among the pines . . . the sun was east, among the pine stems. They were black against the sun . . . Hamdir and Gunnhild . . . and the light gleamed on steel in the bracken below.

HJALLI. With the sun beyond the hill?

LJOD. The light was on a sword in the bracken, Thora.

THORA. Sinfiotli's sword?

HJALLI. Sinfiotli amid the bracken? [*Silence.*] What then, Ljod?

ODD. You did not see the blow?

LJOD. I turned into the garth . . . I was afraid, Thora . . . I was afraid. And I heard a blow and a cry.

THORA [*a shot at a venture*]. And Gunnhild laughed?

LJOD. Gunnhild laughed . . . and I fled to the house. Afterwards I went to the wood. I met Gunnhild. . . . It was a long time after.

THORA. With blood on her hands and her breast.

LJOD. I saw no blood. I found Hamdir . . . Hjalli, a great wound, neck and shoulder. I tried to lift the dead. . . . [LJOD *collapses.* THORA *looks scornfully at her and goes through the inner door.*]

HJALLI. You have been lying, Ljod. [LJOD *sobs.*] Listen, men call me foresighted. If it be foresight to know you are

a liar, I am a seer indeed. Now tell me this—did Gunnhild send you here with this story?

LJOD [*half rising*]. Gunnhild did not send me here. But he lies dead in the bracken.

HJALLI. Go, Ljod. [LJOD *pulls herself together and goes out.*] Come, Odd, we will bring the dead to the house. [HJALLI *and* ODD *go out through the outer door. Shortly after* THORA *and* BORGHILD *enter.* BORGHILD *is young and richly dressed. She wears gold ornaments. She is slighter, weaker and more refined than* THORA. BORGHILD *goes to the High Seat—pale and ready to break down.*]

BORGHILD. There shall be swords out for this in Westerdale.

THORA. Who will draw swords on Sigmund? They are brave enow. . . . But Bjorn is bedridden. They have no leader. Lady, there will be no swords out for this day's work.

BORGHILD. O, if I were an earl . . . a blow from behind . . .

THORA [*cold and provocative*]. How can you strive, Lady? This also must be endured that Hamdir sleep unavenged. [BORGHILD *sobs.*] And had he an avenger . . . who should battle with the luck of the Volsungs?

BORGHILD. Hamdir! Hamdir!

THORA. Luck and witchcraft. Sword and venom will not bite on them, men say. They slay and give no atonement.

BORGHILD. Hamdir—my strong brother—proud to come North to Nidaross. He said he would learn honour from the most honourable of all the kings. And after a while they cut him down from behind.

THORA. Wolves and manslayers both.

BORGHILD [*flaring up*]. Never Sigmund, never Sigmund! Sigmund will do justice—Hamdir!

THORA. The skalds say venom will not touch Sigmund. The skalds are liars, perhaps. But I never heard that Sinfiotli was armoured against death.

BORGHILD [*pulling herself together*]. Sigmund will be coming back soon from the hunt.

THORA. Sigmund will soon be back.

BORGHILD. I will ask justice of the King.

THORA. Little justice the Volsungs are wont to deal.

BORGHILD. I think Sigmund will do justice. And if not . . . Go, Thora, I hear horns in the churchyard. [*Voices outside.* THORA *goes out, but* BORGHILD *waits and twists her hands in the High Seat.*]

SIGMUND [*without*]. Where is Hjalli?

FIRST VOICE. I do not know.

ANOTHER. He and Odd left a while ago in haste.

A THIRD. They made eastward.

A FOURTH. In great haste, on the road to Thorolfstead.

FIRST VOICE. Good sport, King Sigmund?

SIGMUND. A rough hunting, Thorgeir. We roused a bear. Orlyg, bear this spear to Kjartan's smithy.

THIRD VOICE. The shaft is splintered.

SIGMUND. Ill to trust ash wood to ward a bear's grip.

FOURTH VOICE. A sword is a man's weapon, Sigmund. [*General laughter.*]

SIGMUND. Ay, Orlyg, we know your sword play. Trustier sword than spear, Orlyg, and the ale horn trustiest of all. [*More laughter.* SIGMUND *enters, letting in sunlight. He stands dazzled by the half dark. He is a big man, looking older than he really is. His face is furrowed by rough times. He is in every way a strong man, but a little slow till roused. His intellect is older than his physique, and under the combined influences of camping out, hard fighting, and consistent drinking in the evening, he has grown a little sluggish. But his real force of character is plain.* BORGHILD *gets up, hesitates, crosses the room.*]

BORGHILD. A doom, Sigmund!

SIGMUND. Borghild?

BORGHILD [*gaining courage from her volubility*]. Sigmund, Sigmund, vengeance—vengeance for blood. O Sigmund, show a King's heart, the heart of a Volsung. Not a wolf's heart, Sigmund.

SIGMUND. Vengeance on whom, Borghild?

BORGHILD. Vengeance for blood. O Sigmund, I feared you, when your earls came to my father's house. Men had said round the hearth great things and strange—words of terror, Sigmund. Red sword and wolf's heart, they told me, and I was afraid. High honour to me and a great fear, Sigmund. A great loneliness and strange fellowships in the far woods . . . beyond the Keel . . . witchcraft, and changing of shape. No sword would bite, no venom. Show a King's heart, Sigmund.

SIGMUND. What of the old stories? I am true blood of the Volsungs, and I am a King to reward good deeds and evil. Have you found in me a wolf's heart?

BORGHILD. Proof against sword and venom, men said . . . and the heart of a wolf. Forgive me . . . I am afraid. Ever a King's heart to me, Sigmund. There is another . . . a wolf's heart indeed. . . . Make him a wolf's head, Sigmund. Is he proof also? . . .

SIGMUND. Vengeance for blood? . . . for whose blood, Borghild?

BORGHILD. It was a crafty blow, Sigmund. A sudden blow. Requite it.

SIGMUND. Who is slain?

BORGHILD. The stroke was behind. Hamdir is no shirker of sword strokes. A sudden stroke . . . Sigmund . . . the leap of the wolf.

SIGMUND. Hamdir?

BORGHILD. My brother, Sigmund. It is your shame if he escapes. . . .

SIGMUND. Who struck the blow? [SIGMUND *is seated on a bench,* BORGHILD *moving all the time.*]

BORGHILD. Strife over a woman—dark hair and dark heart, Sigmund. She loved Hamdir best . . . short joy of her kisses. O, there's many she loved best, but Hamdir briefest of all. He leaped out of the dark . . . like a wolf.

SIGMUND. Who is the wolf, Borghild?

BORGHILD. A fit stroke to win Gunnhild. An ill blow for an ill woman. The wolf leap. He knew the strokes she loves

Sigmund. She was waiting to kiss Hamdir, and [*she shrieks*] she kissed his wolf over the dead.

SIGMUND. Who is the wolf?

BORGHILD [*very slowly*]. There is one wolf in Thrandheim. There is one wolf in thine house, Sigmund. A wolf's heart.

SIGMUND [*thoughtfully*]. A high heart and a wild heart . . . but no wolf. He did not strike Hamdir from behind . . . unless Hamdir shrank from the eyes of him.

BORGHILD. Fit mates, Gunnhild and Sinfiotli. It was treachery. Hamdir was no shrinker. You Volsungs, drunk with battle, raven-feeders, city-burners, fire and sword, think no man brave unless battle-mad. Swift and cunning and his onset like the wind . . . but the Valkyrs choose the slain, and not the Volsungs. [*In a whisper to herself.*] They kissed over the dead.

SIGMUND. I do not think he struck him from behind.

BORGHILD. They saw the wound. Neck and behind the shoulder. A great sword sweep. I can see it all, Sigmund. I can see two talking under pine branches and another crouched in the bracken. And the hard grip on his sword. I can see into their hearts—three hearts—one feverish and greedy of sweet words, one mad with desire, and one . . . a wolf's heart.

SIGMUND. Did any see the blow?

BORGHILD. None save the three. Gunnhild's maid heard the cry.

SIGMUND [*to himself*]. Sinfiotli would never have cried.

BORGHILD. Gunnhild's maid heard the crash and the cry and the laugh to follow. And they found him . . . in the bracken . . . on his face. And the great sword-slash between neck and shoulder. O, it is so clear. Sigmund, Sigmund, be a true King. Shall your earls and your Queen's brother be slain sackless?

SIGMUND. Was Hamdir's sword in his hand?

BORGHILD. I do not know.

SIGMUND. Hamdir had his sword. . . . What doom do you ask?

BORGHILD. Put him away, put him away. Let him depart

. . . with any that would follow. Wolf's heart and wolf's head. O, Sigmund, there is no desire in him except manslaying. There is no peace in his heart . . . no part in the life of menfolk, sowing and reaping and the ale by the fireside.

SIGMUND. Sinfiotli is young yet.

BORGHILD. Young and deadly. A wolf's cub.

SIGMUND. I remember when men called me wolf. I have learned wisdom. There is only one way to peace, one true love of field and fireside. We come to peace and joy in the harp over the ale, and the slow happy ending . . . over many seas . . . through great battles. Sinfiotli will find that path . . . and then perhaps some one will taunt him . . . the old King that the skalds are praising . . . that he was a wolf and manslayer once.

BORGHILD. Forgive me, Sigmund . . . [*rallying*]; but he will never find that peace. . . . A wolf . . . strife and manslaying, spoil gathered to-day and scattered to-morrow. The mood of a wolf. If he eat out his heart, let him eat it alone . . . in the woods . . . in a cave . . . gaunt and alone . . . till Death lay hold of him. He has no part in the fellowship of men folk. A wolf's head at the feast, a wolf's head over the ale, a wolf's head when the harp goes round and men's hearts are uplifted. Manslaying and strife for the glory of manslaying. Wolf's heart and wolf's head . . . let him dwell with the wolves [*with overwhelming violence*] HIS BRETHREN. [BORGHILD *is staggered by her own words. There is a long pause.* SIGMUND *does not notice the insult.*]

SIGMUND [*to himself*]. I have never paid weregild for my slain.

BORGHILD. Odin reared the house of the Volsungs, Sigmund. They have waged the wars of Odin . . . but this is a wolf . . . a wolf of the Gods. . . .

SIGMUND. Sinfiotli never struck craftily. Face to face . . . and victory to the swifter sword. But strife in the house is an evil thing.

BORGHILD. Sigmund, let him be a wolf's head. O, when

the wild fire wraps Asgard and Odin cries out for Baldur . . . then perhaps he will glut his battle longing.

SIGMUND. I am not wont to pay weregild. Only two know how Hamdir died . . . who struck the first stroke, Borghild . . . and you would put little faith in the tale of either. I have been in straits with Sinfiotli. You have heard strange stories . . . men twist the strands of truth and falsehood in the long evenings and all to make a new wonder. Stark and eager he is, but in the end he shall see the Volsungs in great fame and drink the harvest ale in peace among his earls. I have never paid weregild for any man. But I will not uphold a wrong against a King's daughter. I, Sigmund, son of Volsung, offer atonement. I am old and I bear a King's heart and not a wolf's. Eager as fire; but he has the Volsung blood and some day will find content. Borghild, the heart is hot and the blood cries out bitterly. I too have heard it and answered. And I offer a treble weregild. When a may sets man against man . . . the sword smites of its own will. Name the atonement, Borghild. I too loved to scatter once, when I too was a wolf. But I have learned to gather and store, and to love the long days of the mowing and the yellow acres and the harp over the ale, as I once loved the wind on the outer sea and the breaking shield-burg of the enemy. The treasure house is open . . . red rings and strange cloths from the south and the gauds the dark-haired Welsh sold for amber. I would buy peace, for my son, from my wife. [*Pause.*]

BORGHILD. A wolf's head.

SIGMUND. It was less honour, Borghild, to win vengeance from a lesser man. . . .

BORGHILD. No; the law, Sigmund, the law. They kissed across the dead. A wolf's head, Sigmund.

SIGMUND. It is not the young earls only that make unpeace. The wolf's heart—the heart that cries out for blood . . . the Queens know a wolf's mood also. They laugh when the sword flashes . . . and they will not have it sheathed when the edges are once red. Sheathe the sword, Borghild. Gunn-

hild kindled the fire . . . will you foster it to burn the Volsung's roof tree?

BORGHILD. It was a coward blow, Sigmund.

SIGMUND. Twenty years has Sinfiotli fought by my side. I reared him when he was very little, and he was a man's help to me in my straits. A wolf's leap, a wolf's grip if you will, but never a coward blow. . . . I offer atonement, Borghild.

BORGHILD [*motionless*]. I will take atonement.

SIGMUND. The weregild of three earls and a King's gift withal. And men are wont to blame my giving, Borghild. I go now to choose a ransom. [*He goes out by the inner door.* BORGHILD *half collapses onto one knee with her face in hands. Pause.* THORA *enters and stands watching her.*]

BORGHILD [*without moving*]. He has offered atonement, Thora.

THORA [*ostentatiously avoiding comment*]. Ljod was lying. She saw the blow struck. Hjalli has been to Thorolfstead.

BORGHILD. Sigmund is no wolf. I gave him bitter words. I scolded like a carle's wife. Thora . . . it was a King's deed to buy peace. Sigmund has no one to fear.

THORA. Ljod was lying. She was afraid. They found the sword in Hamdir's hand and footprints in the bracken. And the bracken was beaten down in the sword play. Hjalli and Odd have been to the stead.

BORGHILD. However the blow was struck . . . I have given them peace. [*Rising with arms open as if to show her own inability to battle.*] I, I, have given peace to the Volsungs asking.

THORA. The Volsungs are little wont to ask peace . . . or to grant it.

BORGHILD. It was like Sigmund to offer a weregild. If I had been a King, a seafarer in a great dragon, with her bulwarks bright with shields and the swords grim on the foredeck!

THORA [*meditating*]. The Norns have their will in the

end, be the Kings never so strong. I think that some day the battle will beat over Sigmund's head also.

BORGHILD. Weregild he gives to me; but he will never give weregild to the riders of the foam, to the earls in the long ships, to ward off his last battle. I am Sigmund's wife, and my brother lies dead at the hand of his son, and I am glad at heart for Sigmund's honour. [*A pause.*]

THORA [*greatly daring*]. And does not the blood cry out?

BORGHILD [*viciously*]. He has done a King's deed and I will not hearken it.

THORA. The thralls come to bear in the feast. Will the thralls learn that Sigmund, son of Volsung, has made atonement? Or shall men tell each other, meeting on the far hills, that Hamdir died sackless?

BORGHILD. Let them say what they will.

THORA. Men say that blood cries bitterly. It was my father's brother reared me; and he told me, once, of the slaying of my father. And he said that the blood cried out day and night. And at last, he waited, he and my mother's cousin and two others, where the ferry puts to land, in Gothar fiord. You know Gothar fiord well, in the south, and the rock path to the uplands and the Westerdale steads. There was a slaying round the ferry. My father's brother showed me the scar on his throat. I was little, but I remember the telling. That was because of the crying out of a carle's death. It is well to know that the blood of a King's brother can be stilled for a ransom.

BORGHILD. Be silent; be silent. I will not hear the blood.

THORA. Perhaps the blood will be silent for your bidding. I will be silent, Lady. [THORA *goes out.* BORGHILD *hesitates —makes an agonised gesture and rushes out.*]

ACT III

The Scene is as Before

Sigmund *and* Borghild *sit on the High Seat.* Eyolf, Hervard *and other Earls sit on the benches. The hall is lit with torches. There is a table on the dais with ale and mead. Maids are filling horns for Earls. Thralls, including* Hjalli, *sit at each end.*

Sigmund [*rising*]. The Bragi cup! [*There is a shout and all drink.*]

Eyolf [*a young man, flushed with drink*]. My vow, King Sigmund.

Sigmund. What is your vow, Eyolf?

Eyolf. A journey to Micklegard and a deed that shall sound in the North, within the year. [*An awkward silence.*]

An Earl [*to his neighbour*]. One thing and one alone wilder than the heart of Sinfiotli—and that is Eyolf's talk when the ale is in him.

Sigmund. What is the deed to be, Eyolf?

Eyolf [*unabashed*]. I know not yet: but there are great deeds to do in Micklegard. Room for a sword sweep.

Another Earl. We have found North broad enough for any man's sword sweep, Eyolf.

Sigmund [*smiling*]. True heart of a Norseman, Eyolf. But Micklegard is far. It would be a loud trumpet to sound to here from Micklegard. [*Pause.*] Has not Sinfiotli come? The ale does not warm the heart without Sinfiotli.

Second Earl [*to* First]. Brave feast fellow, Sinfiotli . . . for Hamdir's funeral ale.

First Earl. Are we ravens that he alone must pour us our wine?

BORGHILD [*with restraint*]. Sinfiotli never loved the ale, Sigmund, and to-night I think he does well to shun it.

SIGMUND [*drinking vigorously*]. Plough and scythe, roof-tree and fiddle, these four are weariness to all Volsungs. Until they grow wise.

EYOLF. Then may I, and those I love, grow never wise, O Sigmund. I drink to three good things, King Sigmund. I drink to the sword that breaks the peace strings, to the storm that drives us whither we would go, to the comrade who trusts little in Odin and Thor, and much in his own high heart. [*Drinks hugely and sinks onto the benches.*] And the rest is . . . foam on a broken wave.

SIGMUND [*half amused*]. Wild words, Eyolf.

HERVARD. O Sigmund, after many years wise and famous, I think your own heart says the same.

EYOLF. Drink with me, Sigmund, son of Volsung, to the swift blow and the scattered spoil.

SIGMUND. I will drink to the sheathed sword and the garnered harvest, Eyolf. And I have yet to be called dastard by any man.

HERVARD. You have smitten and scattered, Sigmund, and now you may have peace if you will. But I think that the days of storm-faring were better.

EYOLF. Drink a cup to my heart's desire, Sigmund, for the sake of the slaying of . . . Siggeir. [*He looks straight at* BORGHILD. BORGHILD *flushes.*]

SIGMUND. Brave days, Hervard. Well, I drink.

BORGHILD. To the wolf's heart, Sigmund?

SIGMUND. To the young man's sword and the long ships and the old warfaring, Borghild. And the ale round the hearth to follow . . . Sinfiotli has not come. He will drink this cup with a will.

BORGHILD [*softly*]. This and another, Sigmund. For my asking. Because I have given him peace. [*Pause.*]

SIGMUND [*rising*]. I drink the funeral ale, I drink the ale of Hamdir . . . in the harping of the skalds . . . in the feasts of Asgard . . . in the hearts of the Norsemen. [*The toast*

is honoured with moderate enthusiasm, except by EYOLF, *who shouts very loudly.*] O Borghild, to-morrow we lay Hamdir in his cairn. With sword and byrnie, as befits a warrior who died with sword aloft. And the barrow shall be greatly piled, far seen, a landmark for the long ships. The Vikings on the long ships shall see the howe. High on Langness. Till it shall no more be Langness in the mouths of seafaring men, but Hamdirness. Memory to Hamdir. [*Another draught.*] Farewell, brother, till the twilight falls and the great darkness, and thou and I stand with all true Norsemen against the wolf and the wildfire. And what shall then betide, the wisest skald cannot tell us. This is sure, that Death and Hell lay hold on the faint heart.

EYOLF. Hell for the faint heart! Valhall for the slayer!

HERVARD. Fool! [*There is some confusion in* EYOLF'S *direction.*]

SIGMUND [*again rising*]. Earls of the Goth folk, hearken. Ye have heard, lies or truth, stories of the slaying of Hamdir. This at least is sooth, that he strove with Sinfiotli over a may. And his stroke was the slower. I, Sigmund, son of Volsung, give my first weregild. I have slain some in battle and some wreaking the wrongs of the Volsungs. Nor has the sword of Sinfiotli always slept in the peace strings. We twain have made no atonement for our dead. But this is a hearth slaying and strife is evil in the house. Queen Borghild is no stepmother, and I would not have hatred come between my son and my wife. Therefore I offer weregild, the weregild of three earls. [*He makes a sign to* HJALLI, *who, with* ODD, *brings an open chest to* BORGHILD'S *feet.* EYOLF *growls.*] Behold, Borghild, the atonement of Hamdir. Many have wreaked their dead, here and in the South lands and West-over-sea; but no man hides in his treasure house the weregild of the Volsungs. No, not in all the broad lands where the Volsungs have done battle from Nidaross to Micklegard. To you, Borghild, I give it. I have chosen out red rings and red wedges, silken raiment wrought cunningly, brooches gay with strange stones and molten glass; and I add this great golden beaker. My father's

brother won it, a King's gift of the East, in his wars beyond Micklegard. And I have seen Volsungs drink the Odin cup therein, and the memory of many great earls whom Odin took in the sword play. Has my son your peace, Queen Borghild? [*The outer door opens and* THORSTEIN *enters.* BORGHILD *has the cup in her hands. The maids are stretching their necks.*]

THE FARTHEST FROM THE CENTRE. Outland silk, he said.

ANOTHER. There is a great peacock wrought in the silk.

ANOTHER. Borghild will be giving her blue mantle to Thora.

ANOTHER. Thora will have the mantle. And Thora had the coif with the pearls.

EYOLF. Does Sinfiotli fear Borghild?

AN EARL. Eyolf is drunk.

SIGMUND [*to* BORGHILD]. Has my son your peace?

THORSTEIN. A word, King Sigmund, from Sinfiotli.

BORGHILD [*to herself*]. Sigmund is never ashamed. Shame could not touch Sigmund.

SIGMUND. What word from Sinfiotli? Why comes he not?

BORGHILD [*to herself*]. Sigmund is never ashamed, shame could not touch Sigmund.

THORSTEIN. Sinfiotli sails for Micklegard. His dragon is making ready. They are filling the water casks even now.

EYOLF [*shouting*]. Ale for Vikings, Thorstein.

THORSTEIN. He would say farewell, King Sigmund.

SIGMUND. Tell Sinfiotli I have made his peace. The dragon need not sail. Let him join the feast with his fellows. The ale is not merry without Sinfiotli.

THORSTEIN. He doubted your anger would be hot against him, King Sigmund.

EYOLF [*shouting*]. Sinfiotli fears neither Sigmund nor Borghild.

HERVARD [*draws his sword*]. Drunken fool.

EYOLF. A blow like his before I sail. [*Confusion—all rise —*EYOLF *is tripped and falls.*]

SIGMUND. Hervard! Small profit striving with the drunken. The ale speaks and not he. [EYOLF *is thrust outside through the outer door into the rain.*]

EYOLF [*as he is pushed out*]. Sinfiotli . . . is not the only one . . . who can . . . strike a great stroke.

SIGMUND. Bid Sinfiotli come, Thorstein. There is no anger against Sinfiotli. Neither in my heart nor the Queen's. [*Exit* THORSTEIN.]

BORGHILD. Will he thank you for the atoning, Sigmund?

SIGMUND. The atoning is taken, Borghild. And he also knows that hearth-slaying is evil, and exile a sore thing. Am I ashamed in this atoning?

BORGHILD. I do not hold you shamed, Sigmund.

SIGMUND. I taught Sinfiotli honour. When we were wolves' heads, he and I. Wood-dwellers—wolves they said. I taught him honour. Stark against the Kings and the bearers of the sword. Sinfiotli knows there is no honour in striving with the queen folk. Peace is better than seafaring, Borghild. The thralls and the handmaids think there is no honour except in sword-strokes. But the Volsungs are of the king folk, and the Queens also know that there is glory in forbearing.

BORGHILD. There is honour in forbearing, Sigmund.

SIGMUND. Sinfiotli is not as Eyolf, Borghild. He and I have been the swords of Odin. When a man drinks ale in the hall, manslaying is a fine thing. A gaud or a peacock's feathers for the dazzling of the maidens. And the skald loves a manslaying, to make a song of it.

SKALD. The skald praises the fallen also, King Sigmund.

SIGMUND [*still garrulous*]. Ay, the skald praises the fallen. Some day, when I am worn with working Odin's will, I too shall face my last battle. I think it is near at hand. And the young earls who have never stood in the shield wall, will cry out—Valhall for the slayer, Hell for the slain.

SKALD. The skalds cry out—Valhall for the mightily fallen, Sigmund. And men hearken the skalds.

SIGMUND [*drinking*]. Sinfiotli and I have been through many battles. And are beyond vainglory. The Queens do not hear the words of the drunken. [*The outer door opens.* SINFIOTLI *enters amid dead silence, followed by* THORSTEIN *and another, and walks halfway up the hall.*]

SIGMUND. Have you no word for my son, Borghild? [*The silence continues and becomes oppressive.*]

BORGHILD [*with an effort*]. I give Sinfiotli peace. [*Still silence.*]

SIGMUND. Borghild gives you peace, Sinfiotli. The dragon will not sail.

AN EARL. Then there may be peace on the road to Micklegard also. [*Uneasy laughter in the hall.* SINFIOTLI *is still silent.*]

BORGHILD. Sigmund has bought you peace. With silks and a beaker the craftsmen wrought in the south. You have peace, Sinfiotli.

SINFIOTLI [*calmly*]. And the Volsungs have learned to pay weregild.

SIGMUND. I do not think the Volsungs are shamed.

THORSTEIN [*with intense scorn*]. Shamed! [SINFIOTLI *does not move.*]

SINFIOTLI. I can set little store by weregild. I think that no man is able to change the word of the Norns. Though he offer gold or peacocks wrought on outland silks, or a beaker smithied by a very cunning craftsman.

BORGHILD. I have taken atonement . . . for my brother's blood. And I give you peace. . . . And you are too proud, Sinfiotli, to take my peace.

SINFIOTLI [*wearily*]. I am proud no whit, Queen Borghild. But I think weregild is an idle thing. Be the craftsman never so cunning. The Norns have their will and every man's heart drives him to the end they have appointed.

BORGHILD [*making a final effort, amid dead silence*]. I, too, set little store by the red rings. But there is a weregild of the heart also. And Sigmund has paid it in full. [*Pause.*]

SIGMUND. Sinfiotli, I have made a hearth peace. Will you rend it with your cold words? Drink a peace ale with my Queen and the earls.

SINFIOTLI. I do not scorn this atonement, Queen Borghild.

SIGMUND. Drink a peace ale, Sinfiotli. And my earls will be merry.

SINFIOTLI [*more passionately*]. We ride the horse of the Norns, thou and I, Queen Borghild. It is altogether vain to blind our eyes and to bridle our hearts. To strive against the end appointed is to battle with the sea. Ride the horse of the Norns, and the skalds may make a song of the riding.

BORGHILD [*very still*]. To Death and Hell, Sinfiotli?

SINFIOTLI. To the end appointed, Borghild. [*The silence is leaden.*]

SIGMUND. Sit and drink a peace ale, Sinfiotli, among the Volsung earls. Why make the hearts of the earls cold with your forebodings? I think foreboding is also idle.

SINFIOTLI. It is all idle, except the purpose of the Norns.

AN EARL. Sinfiotli is drunk with pride.

ANOTHER EARL. He is fey.

SINFIOTLI [*suddenly*]. I take your peace, Queen Borghild. I take your good-will and your love. You will not remember my cold words. You also are of the blood of the king folk. [*He crosses the stage and sits on* SIGMUND'S *right. As he passes he exchanges a curious look of intelligence with* BORGHILD.]

SIGMUND [*drinking*]. I am glad of this peace. My son will not sail for Micklegard.

SINFIOTLI. I will not sail for Micklegard. [BORGHILD *repeats the words to herself.*]

SIGMUND. You will be weary of warfaring for a little, Sinfiotli.

SINFIOTLI [*with his head dropped a little, and a touch of sarcasm in his tone*]. Yes, I have had my fill of slaying for a little.

SIGMUND. Let them have peace, West-over-sea, and the Kesar's foemen of Micklegard, even as we have peace. I drink to peace and the garnering of the harvest.

SINFIOTLI. Peace and the garnering of the harvest for me also. [*Disquiet in the hall—the health is not properly honoured.*]

HJALLI [*to* ODD]. I think the blow is going to fall.

SIGMUND. I also am glad because of the peace. You will

THE PASSING OF SINFIOTLI
Hall of Sigmund

abide in the Hall of the Volsungs, Sinfiotli, for a season. And we will ride in the woods with falcons. You are young yet, but the peace shall not weary you. And the skald shall remember the old stories and the last battle of Volsung, my father. You will abide here the winter, Sinfiotli.

SINFIOTLI. I shall abide the winter through, father.

HJALLI. The blow is ready to fall.

SIGMUND. The harvest ale is always merry. But it shall be merrier yet. And men shall remember our Yuletide feasting.

HJALLI [*whisper*]. The ale is red as blood.

SIGMUND. Borghild, it were a Queen's deed to pour ale to Sinfiotli. Let all the Earls see that the striving is forgotten. [*Pause.*]

BORGHILD. We have not yet drunk the peace cup, Sinfiotli, you and I. We have drunk the garnering of the harvest, but the harvest of peace is yet to garner. Earls of the Goth folk, behold! Not ale but mead shall be the drink. Mead that I brewed—and in Westerdale they deemed me not unhandy at the brewing of the mead. Honey of my own bees, and the herbs I gathered in my own plot. [*She rises and goes out. Deadly silence.*]

SIGMUND. You will honour the cup, Sinfiotli?

SINFIOTLI. I will honour the cup, father. [*Re-enter* BORGHILD, *with a great jug of mead.*]

HJALLI [*shrieking*]. Blood in the mead cup!

AN EARL. Is Hjalli drunken as Eyolf?

ANOTHER EARL. Words of ill-luck.

HERVARD. Hjalli is not wont to be drunken over the ale. [BORGHILD *pours mead into the beaker to* SINFIOTLI. *He rises, takes it, and looks her full in the eyes.*]

BORGHILD. Drink our peace ale, Sinfiotli.

SINFIOTLI. There is guile in the cup, Borghild. [*There is a dead silence.* SIGMUND *takes the cup and drinks it off.* BORGHILD *again pours mead.* SINFIOTLI *again looks her in the face.*]

BORGHILD. Drink our peace ale, Sinfiotli. If you will peace. The first draught of the cup of atoning.

SINFIOTLI. Venom in the cup. [SIGMUND *again takes it and drinks it off.* BORGHILD, *trembling slightly, again fills and presents the cup.*]

BORGHILD. The Volsungs have not the old heart, Sinfiotli. They give weregild and let others drink their ale. Drink our peace ale, Sinfiotli.

SINFIOTLI. Death in the cup.

SIGMUND [*quite tipsy*]. Ride the horse of the Norns, Sinfiotli.

SINFIOTLI [*clearly*]. I drink to Valhall and the last battle of Odin. [*He drinks and falls to the ground with a crash.* SIGMUND *stares down at* SINFIOTLI. BORGHILD, *pale as death, looks at him, then rises, turns to the chest and with a gigantic effort, overturns it. The gold rolls all over the hall.*]

BORGHILD. I will not have Hamdir's weregild. [*A long silence.*] Take back the red rings . . . take back the red rings. [*The Earls are gathered in a circle close to the dead.* SIGMUND *slowly descends the steps and stands over the dead. The Earls retire a little.*]

BORGHILD. He *bade* me ride the horse of the Norns . . . cold heart and deadly . . . cold heart, Sigmund . . . I will not have the gold, Sigmund. [*The maidens are all shrinking and deadly afraid.* THORA *comes right down the stage and stands bolt upright beside* BORGHILD.]

SIGMUND. He has fought the wars of Odin . . . Signy's son and mine . . . together in the wild wood . . . wolves together . . . together in the burning of Siggeir. Swords of Odin.

BORGHILD. Take back the weregild, Sigmund . . . [*half mad*] lock up the gold in the treasure house . . . slayings enough to atone, Sigmund . . . slayings enough . . . but not Hamdir's. . . . Take back the weregild, Sigmund.

SIGMUND. Swords of Odin. And my last battle at hand also. Swords for Odin's slayings . . . and a song for the skalds.

HERVARD [*very quietly and gravely*]. The dastard is a fickle sword. And you have been swords of a true forging. I, too,

would fain be broken when the sword has ended its smiting.

SIGMUND. Swords side by side. And I do not think the skalds will forget them. Here nor in Valhall, Sinfiotli. And I think my last battle is at hand.

BORGHILD [*sobbing*]. Take back your gold, Sigmund.

SIGMUND. Odin has always need of the Volsungs. Other swords for Odin's battles. But none more stark than Sinfiotli. Other blades and great deeds for the skalds. But this sword is broken. [SIGMUND *lifts* SINFIOTLI. *The Earls part before them. Slowly and in great silence he bears him out. As the door opens the thresh of rain is heard, and the draught makes the torches flicker. A maid stealthily puts her foot on a ring which has rolled to where she was standing with a ewer of ale.* BORGHILD *has collapsed.* THORA *supports her, trying to look defiant, but awed. Another maid is sobbing, away at the back. Her sobs are the only sound to be heard. Everybody is watching the two go out as the door slashes to.*]

HJALLI [*staring*]. I think I hear the horns sounding. They blow the horns for the last battle of Sigmund. And the Volsung sword broken.

[CURTAIN.]

ULYSSES *

A Drama in a Prologue
and Three Acts

By

STEPHEN PHILLIPS

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INTRODUCTION

ULYSSES

The history of poetic drama in English begins really with Christopher Marlowe in the sixteenth century and marches on to a splendid climax in the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. When this generation of playwrights had passed away, no poetic drama was ever again strikingly successful on the English stage until the production of Stephen Phillips's *Paolo and Francesca* and *Ulysses*.

Stephen Phillips, for the time being only, won back popular esteem for the poetic drama; at the very threshold of the twentieth century, two of his plays, *Paolo and Francesca* (1901) and *Ulysses* (1902) were acted in London, the first under the direction of George Alexander at St. James's Theatre, the second by Beerbohm Tree at Her Majesty's, and enjoyed long, prosperous runs.

This triumph came to Stephen Phillips in his early thirties, for he was born in July, 1868, at Somertown near Oxford. His brother, Harold Phillips, has observed, "It was to our mother, with her keenly æsthetic instincts, brilliant intellect and deeply sympathetic and highly sensitive nature that Stephen Phillips really owed his genius." It is repeatedly related of him that his interest in poetry was first aroused by hearing his mother read aloud Coleridge's *Christabel*. Through this mother the author of *Ulysses* was related to Wordsworth.

He first attended the Stratford-on-Avon Grammar School, and later at the time that his father, the Reverend Stephen Phillips, was an honorary canon of the Peterborough Cathedral, the son was enrolled at the Peterborough Grammar School. The future poet entered Queens' College, Cambridge, in 1886, but before the end of his first term he ran away to join the famous Shakespearian company of his cousin, F. R. Benson. In school and at the University, " his tastes," so his brother has testified, " of course, naturally ran to the Greek and Latin classics; and here he was on another and a higher plane than either his masters or fellow students, for he would become so engrossed with the beauty of the lines as to be frequently passed in class by quite ordinary youths with a certain linguistic propensity and minds intent for the most part on mere grammatical analysis." The poetic plays that he was to write in later years reflect his deep and intimate knowledge of the drama of the Greeks.

During the six years that he spent on the road with the Benson Company, Phillips played various rôles, among which were Hastings in *Richard III,* Snake in *The School for Scandal,* Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice,* the Ghost in *Hamlet,* King Claudius in the same play, and Iago in *Othello.*

After this practical stage experience he spent a few years as a tutor preparing young men to take the army examinations. It was during this period of his life that his cousin, Laurence Binyon, one of the most interesting of living English poets, deliberately undertook to stimulate Stephen Phillips to greater efforts. The agreement was that each cousin was to produce a poem a week and then meet and compare notes. To *Primavera* (1890), the first volume containing any of Phillips's poems,

Laurence Binyon had also contributed. Phillips's first decisive success was the winning of a prize of one hundred guineas offered in 1897 by *The Academy* to the author of the most important book of the year. This volume contained some of his best known non-dramatic poems, notably his lines *To Milton, Blind*. The following is a chronological list of his most important works:

	1890	*Primavera*
	1894	*Eremus*
	1896	*Christ in Hades*
	1897	*Poems*
	1898	*Endymion*
*	1899	*Paolo and Francesca*
*	1900	*Herod*
*	1902	*Ulysses*
*	1904	*The Son of David*
*	1906	*Nero*
*	1908	*Faust* (with J. Comyns Carr)
*	1910	*Pietro of Siena*
	1910	*The New Inferno*
*	1912	*The King*
	1915	*Panama & Other Poems*
*	1915	*Armageddon*
*	1915	*Harold*

In December, 1915, Stephen Phillips died. He had recorded his reactions to the Great War in his 1915 volumes. At the time of his death he was editor of *The Poetry Review*.

The following personal impressions of Stephen Phillips have been set down by two writers who knew him in the heyday of his success in London. C. Lewis Hind, who had met Phillips at the home of Wilfred and Alice

* Plays.

Meynell, pictures him thus: "His firm well-knit figure looked as unyielding as a Roman statue, and Roman-like were his features. He might have stepped off an enlarged coin." Another observer records his impressions as graphically. "Phillips," writes Coulson Kernahan in his amusing book, *In Good Company,* "would begin to read or recite with slow unemotional deliberateness—the enunciation perfect, and the voice exquisitely modulated—but at first there was just a suspicion of a chant, an incantation, as if by a spell to call up the Spirit of Poetry before us. It was beautiful, it was the perfection of elocutionary art, but for the time being it seemed cold and afar from us and our lives, like the frozen marble beauty of Greek statuary. Soon his voice would deepen, and the room become strangely still. It was the listeners now who reminded one of statuary, for each sat unmoving, scarcely breathing, every sense, every thought, centred on the reader who, his great eyes ablaze, yet all unseeing, sat as if in a trance. . . . In his voice when he was deeply stirred by poetry, there was something measured, unhasting, majestic, like the vastness of great waters moving in flood of full tide under the moon."

WORD LIST

asphodel, a white-flowered plant of the lily family; the flower of the dead in Greek myths.

caduceus, the wand of Hermes, consisting of a staff entwined with serpents and surmounted with wings.

Charon, the ferryman who rowed the dead over the Styx, a river in Hades. Pronounced ka'rŏn.

Cimmerian, derived from Cimmerii, a people mentioned by Homer as living in perpetual darkness, hence shrouded in dense gloom. "Cimmerian" was used in this sense by Milton also in *L'Allegro.* Pronounced ki-mē'ri-an.

Clytemnæstra, Agamemnon's treacherous wife, who had him murdered on his return from Troy. Pronounced klī"tĕm-nĕs'tra.

Cyclops, one of a race of one-eyed giants living in Sicily, the race to which Polyphemus belonged. Pronounced çȳ′clŏps.

Daphne, a maiden changed into a laurel while fleeing from Apollo. This story is told in comic vein in Lowell's *A Fable for Critics.* Pronounced dăf′-ne.

Eurydice and Orpheus, a famous pair of lovers. Eurydice was stung by a serpent and died. Orpheus with his lute so softened by music the heart of Pluto, King of Hades, that Eurydice was allowed to return to life with her husband. There was one promise, however, that Orpheus had to make. He was not to turn to gaze on Eurydice till they reached the upper world. Orpheus could not help looking back; Eurydice vanished from his sight. Pronounced yu-rȳd′i-çē, ôr′fē-ŭs.

Furies, the Greek goddesses of vengeance, three in number. Their Greek name was the **Erinyes.**

gird, sneer, attack with sarcasm.

Laertes, a king of Ithaca; father of Ulysses. Pronounced lā-ēr′tēs.

moony, moonstruck, sickly, foolish.

Mycenæ, in ancient geography a city fourteen miles south-southwest of Corinth. Its excavation disclosed some of the earliest materials recovered for the study of Greek art. Mycenæan ornament may be dated back to the twelfth century B.C. Pronounced mȳ-çē′nē.

Neriton, from Neritos, a mountain in Ithaca. Pronounced nĕr′ĭ-ton.

palls, lies heavy, becomes tiresome.

Phædra, the wife of Theseus, who killed herself. Pronounced fē′dra.

Phyllis and Demophoön, two famous Greek lovers. Phyllis, daughter of the King of Thrace, thinking herself deserted by Demophoön, who had promised to marry her, hanged herself. Pronounced fȳl′ĭs, de-mŏf′o-ön.

Polyphemus, the Chief of the Cyclopes. He was blinded by Ulysses and his companions, who were thus enabled to escape from captivity in the giant's cave. Pronounced pŏl″y-fē′mŭs.

Prometheus, the Titan who, to benefit the race of men, stole fire from heaven. For this theft Zeus chained him to a rock and appointed an eagle daily to consume his liver, which was nightly restored. His spirit was unquenchable, for he knew that one day he would be released and Zeus be overthrown. He has become a symbol in our modern world of the fetterless human spirit. Pronounced pro-mē′thūs.

Protesilaus and Laodamia, Protesilaus was one of the Greek captains who went to the siege of Troy. The prophecy had been made that the first hero to land on Trojan soil should die. Protesilaus offered himself as the victim. The devotion between him and his wife, Laodamia, is the outstanding feature of the story. She implored the gods to allow him to return to her for one day. Her request granted, she perished on his second funeral pyre and they fared together to the land of the shades. Wordsworth's poem *Laodamia* narrates the story of these two lovers. Pronounced prō″tĕs-i-lā′us, lā″od-ă-mē′a.

shingle, a beach composed of coarse gravel.
Sisyphus, a king of Corinth, whose doom in Hades it was to roll uphill a huge stone that continually rolled down again. Pronounced sĭs'y-fŭs.
Stygian, relating to the Styx, the river in Hades over which Charon rowed the dead. Pronounced stĭg'i-an.
Tantalus, condemned in Hades to be plunged up to the neck in water, with grapes suspended above his head, and eternally thwarted when he attempted to taste one or the other. Pronounced tăn'ta-lŭs.
umbrage, shadow, shade.
whist, silent, mute.

FOR SUPPLEMENTARY READING

William Archer, *Real Conversations,* III, *With Mr. Stephen Phillips, The Critic,* Vol. 38, New York, 1901.
Edmund Gosse, *The Revival of Poetic Drama, The Atlantic Monthly,* Vol. 90, Boston, 1902.
Edward Everett Hale, Jr., *Dramatists of To-day,* New York, 1911.
J. R. Lowell, *The Sirens.*
Alfred Tennyson, *The Lotus Eaters.*
Alfred Tennyson, *Ulysses.*
Edith Wyatt, *Stephen Phillips, North American Review,* Vol. 203, New York, 1916.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

How did Stephen Phillips's experience as an actor help him to write plays?

Select such episodes and references in *Ulysses* as are based on the portions of Homer's *Odyssey* that you have read.

At what moment in the play is the reader or the audience convinced that Ulysses will succeed in reaching home in time?

How much of the play is given over to explanation before the action begins?

What devices are used in Act III to prolong the suspense?

What characters in the play present contrasts (e.g., Athene and Poseidon)?

Make a paragraph of the following ideas. Illustrate freely from the play. "The theme of *Ulysses* is the hero's efforts to reach home. Athene does all she can to assist him. Poseidon wishes to prevent him from ever again seeing Ithaca. The suitors seek to destroy his home before he can reach it. Penelope tries to keep his home sacred for him. Agamemnon discourages him in Hades. His

mother, Anticleia, encourages him. Eumæus and Telemachus likewise guard his home."

How does the verse in the Prologue to *Ulysses* differ from that in the body of the play?

Describe and name the foot most commonly used in blank verse. What substitutions may occur? Illustrate.

Compare the blank verse of *Ulysses* with that of *The Merchant of Venice* or of *Julius Cæsar*. What differences do you find? What similarities?

Point out ten lines that illustrate Phillips's use of alliteration.

What scenes in *Ulysses* are especially adapted to a spectacular production?

Put this quotation into your own words and illustrate it from *Ulysses* and from any Shakespearian play that you have read. "Speech, then, in the poetic drama, is not the imitation of ordinary conversation; it is not the mere turning of ordinary conversation into verse: it is a beautiful and expressive saying aloud of what people have only thought, or meant, or felt, without being able to put those thoughts, or intentions, or emotions, into words. . . . It must carry always the illusion of words actually spoken; it must seem to us as if such or such a person of the drama might have said just those words if poetry had really been his native language, as it might be the language native to his soul."

Collect as many references to Helen in English poetry as you can. Jot them down as you come across them in the works of contemporary or older poets. Get into the habit of making your own anthologies. (See *Ulysses* I. 221 and I. 290.)

What other great poems besides the *Odyssey* contain an account of a descent into the underworld?

Dramatize either the Nausicaä or the Circe episode from the *Odyssey*.

What is the most interesting feature of the design for the scene of Ulysses's return? What would be the most effective color scheme? Why?

TO

JAMES KNOWLES

WITH GRATITUDE AND REGARD
I DEDICATE
THIS PLAY

CHARACTERS[1]

ON OLYMPUS

ZEUS (*Jupiter*), *with thunderbolt.*
POSEIDON (*Neptune*), *with trident.*
HERMES (*Mercury*), *with caduceus and winged sandals.*
ATHENE (*Minerva*), *with spear, shield, and ægis.*
APHRODITE (*Venus*), *with roses and doves.*

ARES (*Mars*), *with spear and shield;* APOLLO, *with lyre;* HEPHÆSTUS (*Vulcan*), *with hammer and pincers;* DEMETER (*Ceres*), *with cornsheaf, wreath, and veil;* HESTIA (*Vesta*), *with veil and sceptre;* ARTEMIS (*Diana*), *with bow and quiver;* GANYMEDE, *cupbearer to the gods.*

ON EARTH

ATHENE.
HERMES.
CALYPSO, *The Nymph of the Island Ogygia.*

ULYSSES.
PENELOPE, *his wife.*
TELEMACHUS, *his son.*
EURYCLEIA, *his old nurse.*
ANTINOUS (*young, insolent, splendid*)
EURYMACHUS (*mature, politic, specious*)
CTESIPPUS (*elderly, rich, ridiculous*)
} *Chief Suitors to* PENELOPE.

[1] Refer freely throughout this play to J. M. Tatlock, *Greek and Roman Mythology,* New York, 1922; see especially p. 355 for notes on the pronunciation of Greek proper names. Any good manual of mythology may be consulted.

EUMÆUS, *a swineherd.*
MELANTHIUS, *a goatherd.*
PEIRÆUS, *a steward.*
PHEIDON, *a gardener.*
MELANTHO, CLYTIE, CHLORIS } *handmaidens.*
ELPENOR, PHOCION } *sailors.*

SUITORS, HANDMAIDENS, ATTENDANTS, SEA-NYMPHS, SAILORS, ETC.

IN HADES

ULYSSES.
HERMES.

GHOSTS OF PHÆDRA, EURYDICE, SUICIDES, LOVERS, AND CHILDREN.
CHARON.
GHOST OF TEIRESIAS (*a prophet*).
GHOST OF AGAMEMNON.
GHOST OF ANTICLEIA (*the mother of Ulysses*).
FURIES, TANTALUS, SISYPHUS, PROMETHEUS.

ULYSSES

PROLOGUE

The curtain rising discloses the summit of Olympus, an amphitheatre of marble hills in a glimmering light of dawn: where the hills fall away, a distant view of the world, with countries and rivers, is seen far below. Near the front are the seats of the gods, cut in an irregular semicircle in the rock. As the scene progresses the morning light grows clearer, descending gradually from the mountain summit over the figures of the assembled gods. In the centre, ZEUS, *with the empty seat of* HERA *beside him; to his right,* ATHENE, APOLLO, ARTEMIS, HERMES, *and* HESTIA; *to his left,* POSEIDON, DEMETER, ARES, APHRODITE, *and* HEPHÆSTUS.

ATHENE [*comes forward with outstretched arms*]. Father, whose oath in hollow hell is heard;
Whose act is lightning after thunder-word;
A boon! a boon! that I compassion find
For one, the most unhappy of mankind.

ZEUS. How is he named?

ATHENE. Ulysses.

[POSEIDON *starts forward, but it checked by* ZEUS.]

He who planned
To take the towered city of Troy-land;
A mighty spearsman, and a seaman wise,
A hunter, and at need a lord of lies.
With woven wiles he stole the Trojan town
Which ten years' battle could not batter down:
Oft hath he made sweet sacrifice to thee.

ZEUS [*nodding benevolently*]. I mind me of the savoury smell.

ATHENE. Yet he,
When all the other captains had won home,
Was whirled about the wilderness of foam;
For the wind and the wave have driven him evermore
Mocked by the green of some receding shore;
Yet over wind and wave he had his will,
Blistered and buffeted, unbaffled still.
Ever the snare was set, ever in vain;
The Lotus Island and the Siren strain;
Through Scylla and Charybdis hath he run,
Sleeplessly plunging to the setting sun.
Who hath so suffered, or so far hath sailed,
So much encountered, and so little quailed?

ZEUS. What wouldst thou?

ATHENE. This! that he at last may view
The smoke of his own fire upcurling blue.

POSEIDON [*starting forward with menacing gesture*]. Father of Gods, this man hath stricken blind
My dear son Polyphemus, and with wind,
With tempest and a roaring wall of waves,
I fling him backward from the shore he craves.
Sire! if this insolence unpunished go
We soon shall lack all reverence below;
It will be said, " The arm of Zeus doth shake,
Let none henceforward at his thunder quake! "

[ZEUS *moves uneasily.*]

This man is mine! [*Strikes trident on ground.*]
By me let him be hurled
From sea to sea, and dashed about the world!

ATHENE. Hath not Ulysses through such travail trod
As might appease even anger of a god?
Monarch of monstrous rage—

[*With furious gesture at* POSEIDON.]

Thou who dost launch

The crested seas in streaming avalanche!
Lord of the indiscriminate earthquake throe,
Of huge and random elemental blow,
Thou who dost drink up ships, and swallow down
Alike the pious and the impious town,
Whose causeless fury maketh men mistrust
If there be gods, or if those gods be just;
Thy rancour is eternal as thy life,
Thy genius ruin, and thy being strife!

POSEIDON [*tauntingly*]. What is thy heavenly sympathy but this,
To find occasion for Ulysses' kiss?
I will proclaim thee to Olympus—

[POSEIDON *and* ATHENE *start forward, threatening each other with trident and lance.*]

ZEUS. Peace,
Children, and from your shrill reviling cease!
Do thou, Poseidon, for thy part, revere
The dower of her divinity severe:
And, daughter, gird not at his gloomier might,
His spoil of morning wrecks from furious night.
Endowed is he with violence by that law
Which gives thee wisdom—and thy father awe.

ATHENE. Of reverence speak'st thou? Then Ulysses urge
Back to his home irreverence to scourge;
There weeps his wife Penelope, hard driven
By men who spurn at law and laugh at heaven.
A swarm of impious wooers waste his halls,
Devour his substance and corrupt his thralls.

ZEUS [*solemnly*]. Ulysses shall return!

POSEIDON [*starting forward*]. Cloud-gatherer, stay!

ZEUS. Yet canst thou work him mischief on the way.
In thy moist province none can interfere;
There thou alone art lord, as I am here.
Where bides the man?

ATHENE. Calypso this long while
Detains him in her languorous ocean-isle,
Ogygia, green on the transparent deep.
There did she hush his spirit into sleep,
And all his wisdom swoons beneath the charm
Of her deep bosom and her glimmering arm.
Release him, sire, from soft Calypso's wile,
And dreamy bondage on the Witching Isle.

ZEUS [*oracularly*]. Go, Hermes, and unweave her magic art.
Then let him choose; to linger, or depart.
Yet ere he touch at last his native shore
Ulysses must abide one labour more.

ATHENE. Say! say!

ZEUS. The shadowy region must he tread,
And breathing pace, amid the breathless dead,
The track of terror and the slope of gloom,
To learn from ghosts the tidings of his doom.

ATHENE. O spare him, Father, spare him—

ZEUS. He must go
From dalliance to the dolorous realm below.

ATHENE. Remember, sire, she snared with spells his will,
But his deep heart for home is hungering still.

HERMES [*mischievously, pointing at* APOLLO]. And, sire, remember, we are gods, yet we
From human frailties were not ever free.
If even immortals genially stray,
Shall we be merciless to mortal clay?
But lately the sun-god himself was seen
Snatching at Daphne's robe upon the green.

APHRODITE [*with soft insinuation*]. And even thou, O Father—in thy youth—
Didst feel, at least for mortal women, ruth.
To Leda, Leto, Danaë, we are told,
Didst show thee on occasion tender—

[ZEUS *thunders softly. General suppressed laughter among the gods.* ZEUS *thunders loudly: all the gods abase themselves.*]

ZEUS. Hold!
'Tis true that earthly women had their share
In this large bosom's universal care,
True that we gods who on Olympus dwell
With mortal passion sympathise too well. [*Sighs deeply.*]
But, daughter, 'tis not I that do impose
Upon Ulysses this the last of woes.
I to no higher wisdom make pretence
Than to expound eternal sapience.
It is that power which rules us as with rods,
Lord above lords and god behind the gods;
Fate hath decreed Ulysses should abide
More toils and fiercer than all men beside:
Heavily homeward must he win his way
Through lure, through darkness, anguish, and delay.

ATHENE. Yet swear he shall return!

ZEUS. If he can dare
Through shadow of the grave to reach the air.

ATHENE. Then swear it by the Styx!

ZEUS. I swear it.

[*Rolling thunder is heard beneath.*]

HERMES. Hark!
'Tis ratified by rivers of the dark!

ATHENE. I'll to Telemachus his son, and fire
His heart to prove him worthy of his sire.
[*To* HERMES.] Thou to Ogygia in the violet sea,
To touch Ulysses and to set him free.

[*Exit* ATHENE.]

POSEIDON. And I, Ulysses, will thy bark waylay!
And though thou must return, thou shalt not say
Thou wast afflicted lightly on the way.

[*Exit* POSEIDON.]

ZEUS [*to* HERMES]. Hermes, command Calypso to release
Ulysses, and to waft him over seas;
Yet she shall not forewarn him that his fate
Permits him homeward but through Hades' gate.

[*Exit* HERMES.]

[*To* GANYMEDE.] The cup, bright Ganymede! Ah, from the first
The guiding of this globe engendered thirst.
[ZEUS *drinks:* OLYMPUS *fades.*]

ACT I

Scene I

Forecourt of the palace of Ulysses *at Ithaca, with stone seats disposed around it. Towards one side, the front of the palace, with portico and pediment richly decorated in the Mycenæan style. Separated from this, a building containing the women's apartments, from a gallery in which a flight of stairs leads down into the court. A boundary wall encloses both buildings: in the interval between them, the mountains of Ithaca are seen above the wall. To the right a low colonnade, over which appear the trees of the orchard—apples, pears, figs, etc., with a great vine trailing into the court. In the court, a scene of wild laughter, uproar, and prodigal confusion: some of the* Suitors *dancing in abandonment with the* Handmaidens, *while others pour out of the central door of the palace to join the rout.* Telemachus *is seen sitting moodily apart. At last the dance ends in breathless disorder.*

Antinous. Come, Clytie, I have no breath left; drink from this cup! No! I'll have fresh wine. [*Pours it on floor.*] A fresh jar.

Ctesippus. Now may the Lady Penelope defer her answer so long as she pleases. This way of life suits me. Fetch up fresh jars from the cool earth!

Melantho [*entering from door in wall to left of house, and holding up key*]. I have the keys of the great wine vault.

Peiræus. Ah! you have stolen my keys! How shall I meet Ulysses! [*Every one laughs.*]

Melantho. Come with me, some of you, and bring up fresh

jars. [*Exit* MELANTHO *with three* SUITORS. *Enter three* HANDMAIDS, *loaded with flowers and branches of fruit—figs, apples, pears, grapes, pomegranates—followed by* PHEIDON.]

CHLORIS. See! see! we have stripped the great orchard. Here! here! [*They fling fruits and flowers over* SUITORS.]

PHEIDON. Princes, princes! Years and years have I tended these plants and trees, and in a moment they are torn up, and all the fruitage of the summer squandered. Ah! if my master should return!

CTESIPPUS. That need not trouble you. [*All laugh. A wild scene of flinging fruits and red, white, and purple flowers ensues. Enter other* SUITORS *dragging in* EUMÆUS, *the swine-herd.*]

SUITOR. Here is the man who sends us the lean swine.

ANTINOUS. Bring him before me!

EUMÆUS. Princes, I am but a serving-man and have respect unto my lords. Shall I serve up a dish that would poison the great princes?

ANTINOUS. Poison us?

CTESIPPUS [*turning pale*]. What does he say?

EUMÆUS. My lords, a fever is fallen upon the swine! To eat them were death.

CTESIPPUS. Ah! ah!

A SUITOR. What, what, Ctesippus!

CTESIPPUS. Ah! the pain! the pain! I am poisoned. [*All laugh.*]

Do I swell? do I swell already?

SUITORS [*with mock solemnity*]. Farewell, farewell, Ctesippus, thy death is on thee!

CTESIPPUS. Help me within doors! Ah! ah! [*Exit* CTESIPPUS, *supported by* HANDMAIDENS.]

ANTINOUS [*to* EUMÆUS]. This is a lie!

EUMÆUS. There are but two left of the whole herd, and already I like not the countenance of one of them!

ANTINOUS. It is a lie to keep us from our food!

MELANTHIUS [*obsequiously*]. Believe him not, most noble Antinous! But I, it is my pleasure to bring you what I have;

fat kids; sweet morsels for my noble lords. He hath hidden the swine away, most mighty Antinous.

ANTINOUS. Go, drag him out, and drive in the swine.

SUITORS. Come, come: show us the swine!

EUMÆUS. And so I will. [*Aside.*] But not the fat ones. [*Exeunt* EUMÆUS *and* SUITORS.]

ANTINOUS [*to* SERVANTS *within*]. A fresh feast, and swiftly! [*To* SUITORS *and* HANDMAIDS.] Meantime a brief sleep, for the sun bears heavily on us. [*The* SUITORS *lie down in various attitudes. Re-enter* CTESIPPUS, *who starts in horror.*]

CTESIPPUS. Ah! they are dead already.

ANTINOUS. Cease, old fool, and sleep awhile. [CTESIPPUS *lies down.* ATHENE *appears, and stands by* TELEMACHUS.]

ATHENE. What man art thou?

TELEMACHUS. O goddess bright!

ATHENE. Be still;
Where is Ulysses' son?

TELEMACHUS. I am he.

ATHENE. Thou he!
Where is Ulysses' son? Gone on a journey?
Or dead, that this is suffered in his halls?

TELEMACHUS. Nay, goddess; I am he! [*Buries his face in his hands.*]

ATHENE. Art thou his son?
Art thou the child of the swift and terrible one?
Could he who shattered Troy beget thee too?
What dost thou here, thy head upon thy hands,
While all the floor runs with thy father's wine?
What more must these men do to make thee wroth?
How scratch, how bite, how wound thee to find blood?
O, should Ulysses come again, how long,
How long should strangers glut themselves at ease?
Why, he would send a cry along the halls
That with the roaring all the walls would rock,
And the roof bleed, anticipating blood,
With a hurrying of many ghosts to hell
When he leapt amid them, when he flashed, when he cried,

When he flew on them, when he struck, when he stamped them dead!
Up! up! here is thy Troy, thy Helen here!

TELEMACHUS. Goddess, I am but one and they are many.

ATHENE. Thou art innumerable as thy wrongs.
Hist! how they sleep already like the dead!

[ATHENE *disappears.*]

TELEMACHUS. How would my father find me should he come!
Weak, weak! How have I raged and fumed in vain,
And pondered on the doing! Now to do!

[*He starts up.*]

[*During the ensuing speech of* TELEMACHUS, *the* SUITORS *gradually awake and rise, some stretching themselves and yawning.*]

Antinous and Eurymachus, and the rest!
Too long have I borne to see you snatch and spoil,
And eat and swill, and gibe and ravish. Now,
Now from this moment I'll stand master here;
Lord of my own hall, ruler of this hearth.
I'll flit no more a phantom at your feasts,
Discouraged and discarded and disdained.
I am the son of him whom all men feared,
And if he live I hold his place in trust;
If he be dead I stand up in his room.
Now on the instant, out! out at the doors!

[ANTINOUS *yawns loudly.*]

CTESIPPUS. Are we awake, or do we all still dream?

TELEMACHUS. Take wing, you vultures that too long have perched!
Hence, hence, you rats that gnaw my father's grain.

EURYMACHUS. I rub my eyes: is this Telemachus?

TELEMACHUS. I'll have no tarrying! Out, out ere ye wake!
The spirit of my sire descends on me,
And 'tis Ulysses that cries out on you;
You by the throat, Antinous, I take.

[*He makes towards* ANTINOUS, *who holds* CLYTIE *in his arms, while she laughs impudently at* TELEMACHUS.]

ANTINOUS. Softly, sir, softly! Clytie, do not laugh,
This is your lord!

CTESIPPUS. I like to see such mettle!

EURYMACHUS. Be not too rough with him, Antinous!

ANTINOUS. A moment, sir, before you cast us out—

[*He laughs, as do the others till he recovers himself.*]

Before you cast us out—as easily
Doubtless you could!

A SUITOR. We are helpless and o'ermatched!

EURYMACHUS. Sad Ithaca, when such a tyrant rules!

CTESIPPUS. Reach down thy father's bow and shoot us dead!

TELEMACHUS [*to himself, while* EURYMACHUS *and other* SUITORS *at back are consulting in whispers how to deal with him*].

Fool, fool! I have but made myself a jest:
It was not thus Athene meant. Fool, fool!

EURYMACHUS [*coming forward to* TELEMACHUS *from others at back*]. One word! You say that we devour your halls,
That we are vultures, rats. Yet answer this,
Do we bide here, then, of our own inclining?
We come to woo your mother—are your guests,
And we would have an answer ere we go!

ALL. An answer, yes!

ANTINOUS [*starting up*]. An answer from her lips,
Which one of us she chooses for a husband.
Have we not seen moon kindle after moon
And still she puts us by! How long, how long!

TELEMACHUS. Eurymachus, I have blustered windy threats;
But 'tis a grievous office thus to sit
A master and no master in my halls:
And still I say you do me injury,
Devouring thus the substance of my sire!

ANTINOUS. Then let your mother make her choice of us
Would she have strength and splendour of the limbs,
Sap of the body and youth's burning blood,
I little doubt on whom her choice will fall.
EURYMACHUS. Nor I—would she have prudence in her lor
And craft.
CTESIPPUS. And I say nothing, but I know
A woman before prudence chooseth gold.
ANTINOUS [*striking table*]. And till she answer, none, n
Zeus himself
Nor all the gods, shall turn me out of door.
EURYMACHUS. Come, drink, Telemachus; we wish thee wel
'Tis difficult for thee: I'd be thy friend.
Come, lad! [*Putting his arm about* TELEMACHUS.]
TELEMACHUS. I'll not drink with you. What to do?
EURYMACHUS. Now that this little tempest is 'erblown,
Sing to us, minstrel, and chase wrath away.
Come and sit near to me, Telemachus.
CTESIPPUS [*in lachrymose manner*]. Sing, minstrel, sing
now a tender song
Of meeting and parting, with the moon in it;
I feel that I could love as I loved once.
[*Sighs deeply. All laugh*
MINSTREL. O set the sails, for Troy, for Troy is fallen,
And Helen cometh home;
O set the sails, and all the Phrygian winds
Breathe us across the foam!
O set the sails unto the golden West!
It is o'er, the bitter strife.
At last the father cometh to the son,
And the husband to the wife!
[*During this song* PENELOPE *has softly descende*
accompanied by two HANDMAIDS, *and stan*
listening unnoticed. She holds her veil befo
her face.]
And she shall fall upon his heart
With never a spoken word—

PENELOPE [*dropping veil*]. Cease, minstrel, cease, and sing
some other song;
Thy music floated up into my room,
And the sweet words of it have hurt my heart.
Others return, the other husbands, but
Never for me that sail on the sea-line,
Never a sound of oars beneath the moon,
Nor sudden step beside me at midnight:
Never Ulysses! Either he is drowned
Or his bones lie on the mainland in the rain.

[*The* SUITORS *gather around her admiringly and importunately.*]

ANTINOUS. Lady, he sang to chase away our wrath.
Thy son, Telemachus, upbraids us all
That we stay here too long, and cries, "Out! out!"
But we await your answer, still deferred:
Deferred from day to day, from month to month.
I, I at least no longer will be fooled.
Choose one of us, and they—the rest—will go!

PENELOPE. Ah! sirs, remember that I but delay
To choose till I have woven at the loom
A shroud for old Laertes.

MELANTHO. O my mistress!
How canst thou stand and lie to noble men?
O Princes, I have spied on her, and she
At night unravels what she wrought by day.
Ye'll wait a long time if for this ye wait.

PENELOPE. Melantho! I was ever kind to you.

ANTINOUS. We are tricked then!

ALL. We are duped!

EURYMACHUS. O, she is subtle!

PENELOPE. Princes, you drive me like a hunted thing
To feint and double thus.

CTESIPPUS. A game they play!
The mother fools us and the son reviles us.
She thinks us asses, and he calls us rats.
Am I then like a vulture or a rat?

TELEMACHUS. Mother, 'tis true I did upbraid them all;
I am called master here, but am no master;
Lord, but I rule not! smiled at and passed by,
A shadow while these men usurp my halls.
EURYMACHUS [*going to* TELEMACHUS, *and laying hand on his shoulder*]. Lady, indeed your son hath much excuse
And for his sake I'd urge you to make answer,
For his sake and the sake of this dear land,
Which lies now with defenceless coast, a rabble
Leaderless, laws and altars overturned.
Let then your son rise in his father's room.
CTESIPPUS. Let the boy take the reins and drive: but thou
Depart with one of us; and better sure
A live Ctesippus than a dead Ulysses.
EURYMACHUS [*pointing to* TELEMACHUS]. Thy duty points thee to thy son that lives!
PENELOPE. Is it so, child, this brooding on a dream
Hath kept thee from thy kingdom? I am wrapt
So in my husband I forget my son.
TELEMACHUS. Mother, although my office here is hard,
Yet would I rather lie out by the door,
Cursed, spat on, offal thrown to me for food,
Than any grief of mine should hasten you
To answer with your lips but not your heart,
Or be the cause of your departing hence.
PENELOPE. And yet I see 'tis so, and that dear ghost
Excludes the living child: forgive me, son.
[*To the* SUITORS.] Yet, sirs, I cannot on the instant choose
I lose your faces in the thought of him.
Not on the instant—give me a brief space!
Then will I choose as husband one of you.
CTESIPPUS. Though she looked straight before her did thou see
How her eye wandered toward me?
EURYMACHUS. She looked not
On me: that argues in a woman love.

ANTINOUS. See, the young moon hath not begun to quicken,
And on the evening hangs awaiting life.
We'll give thee time till yonder moon is full:
Then shalt thou choose from us. Till then! No more.

PENELOPE. I will do so.

TELEMACHUS. Mother, think not that I—

PENELOPE. My child, I have no blame for you at all.

EURYMACHUS [*to* SUITORS]. Thy answer, then, when that faint moon is full!

ANTINOUS. I challenge any here to hurl the quoit:
To the market-place.

EURYMACHUS. Haste, then, ere it grow dark.

[TELEMACHUS *again comes forward to* PENELOPE.]

PENELOPE. Go with them, child! Nay, thou hast done no wrong.

[*Exeunt all but* PENELOPE, *who stands stretching out her arms in the darkening twilight.*]

Where art thou, husband? Dost thou lie even now
Helpless with coral, and swaying as the sea sways?
Or dost thou live, and art with magic held
By some strange woman on a lone sea isle?
Yet we are bound more close than by a charm;
By fireside plans and counsel in the dawn—
Like gardeners have we watched a growing child.
Thy son is tall, thou wilt be glad of him;
All is in order; by the fire thy chair,
Thy bed is smoothed, but now these hands have left it.
Thou knowest the long years I have not quailed,
True to a vision, steadfast to a dream,
Indissolubly married to remembrance;
But now I am so driven I faint at last!
Why must my beauty madden all these wolves?
Why have the gods thus guarded my first bloom?
Why am I fresh, why young, if not for thee?
Come! come, Ulysses! Burn back through the world!
Come, take the broad seas in one mighty leap,

And rush upon this bosom with a cry,
Ere 'tis too late, at the last, last instant—come!
[*Again the* MINSTREL'S *song is heard as the scene changes.*]

SCENE II

The shore of Ogygia with the sea-cave of Calypso. A vine full of fruit trails over one side of the cave, and round about it grow whispering poplars and alders, from under which rillets of water run to the sea. Beyond, a verdant shore, with thickets of oleander, etc., and the ship of ULYSSES *lying beached. Within the cave a fire burning gives out the smell of sawn cedar and sandalwood. The sun behind is sinking, and the water is golden, while over all broods a magic light. A chorus of* OCEAN-NYMPHS *is discovered dancing and singing on the sands.*

[*Enter along the shore* ULYSSES *and* CALYPSO.]

CALYPSO. Art thou content then, utterly content?
ULYSSES. I'll drift no more upon the dreary sea.
No yearning have I now, and no desire.
Here would I be, at ease upon this isle
Set in the glassy ocean's azure swoon,
With sward of parsley and of violet,
And poplars shivering in a silvery dream,
And smell of cedar sawn, and sandalwood,
And these low-crying birds that haunt the deep.
CALYPSO. Thy home, then? Hast no thought of it at all?
ULYSSES. It seemeth to me like a far, faint place.
CALYPSO. Rememberest thou thy wife?
ULYSSES [*dreamily*]. As through a mist
And dim she seems, and muffled, and away.
CALYPSO. Come! I would have thee sleep upon this bank.
[*She leads* ULYSSES *out and he lies upon a bank.*
Thy purple cloak, wilt have it so, or so?

Now sleep, my love: thou canst not go from me.

[*She returns and passes within the cave. Calling the* NYMPHS *about her:*]

The golden shuttle and the violet wool:
And all ye nymphs sing to me while I spin.

NYMPHS [*singing*]. From the green heart of the waters
We, old ocean's daughters,
Have floated up with mortal men to play;
Out of the green translucent night
Up to the purple earthly light,
To dance with creatures of a day.
For alas! we have seen the sailor asleep
Where the anchor rusts on the ooze of the deep,
But never, never before
Have we seen a mortal dance on the long seashore.

HERMES [*appearing, unseen by* CALYPSO *and her nymphs, and standing over* ULYSSES *where he lies asleep*]. Ulysses, thralled by passion this long while,
I lift from thee the glamour of this isle.
Olympian wisdom bids thee waken free
Of white Calypso's glimmering witchery.
Behold, I raise from thee the magic woe:

[*Touching him with caduceus.*]

Now lies it in thyself to stay or go.

[HERMES *stands aside and watches* ULYSSES, *who, slowly awakening, begins to gaze and stretch out his arms over the sea.*]

NYMPHS [*watching* ULYSSES *from the mouth of the cave and singing*].

See, see Ulysses, weary and wise.
Sing low, sing low with downcast eyes;
For he rouses at last,
And his eyes are cast
To the land where his spirit would be,
Over the violet sea.
Alas for the arms that yearn!
Alas for the eyes that burn!

Ulysses—Ulysses—ah!

[*They all start up as* HERMES *steps suddenly amongst them.*]

CALYPSO. Hermes, I know thee, though too rarely seen;
What is your will with me? Art thou from Zeus?
Some word of Zeus thou bringest; let me hear.

HERMES. Lady, who sitteth there upon the shore?

CALYPSO. It is Ulysses. Ah, 'tis not of him?

HERMES. There sits the man of whom I came to speak.

CALYPSO. Say then!

HERMES. Thus Zeus commands: that you set free
Ulysses.

CALYPSO. Ah!

HERMES. And waft him on the deep,
If in his heart he hungers for his home.

CALYPSO. He is most happy and forgets his home.

HERMES. Yet if he shall desire at last his hearth—

CALYPSO. He will not—no!—

HERMES. Then shalt thou waft his sails.

CALYPSO. He shall not go!

HERMES. But Zeus commands.

CALYPSO. I say
He will not care to go, doth not desire;
To leave me hath not entered in his heart.
Yet will I set him free if he so choose;
But I am sure of him.

HERMES. And he shall have
More peril being gone, down into hell
Must pass, and view the hollow night of things.

CALYPSO. This will I tell him.

HERMES. No! for Zeus forbids.
Farewell, Calypso—linger I may not.

[*Exit* HERMES.]

CALYPSO. I cannot doubt thee, and the spell was strong

[*She goes to the door of the cave and calls* ULYSSES *three times. At last he hears and rises, then comes*

slowly down to her rubbing his eyes like one awakening from a trance.]

CALYPSO. Art thou Ulysses that so slowly comest?
Who hath bewitched thee that thou gazest past me?
And thou wert wont to rush into my arms!

[*She leads him within the cave*—ULYSSES *still seeming numbed and changed.*]

Ulysses, there hath been a god with me,
A messenger from Zeus. Come from the shadow,
That I may see your face. Thus Zeus commands:
"If sad Ulysses yearns to see his home— "

[*He starts and gazes again seaward.*]

Ah! you would go then! back the bright blood comes,
And to your eyes the sea-light!

ULYSSES. Goddess—I—

CALYPSO. "If sad Ulysses burns to see his home,"
Then Zeus commands me that I let you go.
Ah! set your teeth upon your lips: but still
I hear wild music at your heart.

ULYSSES [*beginning to recover and realize*].
O whence
Comes this release—or—this command of Zeus?

CALYPSO. O spoil it not! then thus comes this release.
The gods have pity on you, seeing you
Unwillingly beguiled by cold Calypso.
And more; I am to swell your aching sails,
And breathe you with a breeze over the deep:
Only if you desire—'tis in your will.
Well! well! Why do you gaze so in my eyes?

ULYSSES. I have learned to dread what cometh suddenly,
And sniff about a sweet thing like a hound:
And most I dread the sudden gifts of gods.

CALYPSO. Gifts!

ULYSSES. I would say commands—this is some lure.
Swear suddenly 'tis not! [*Harshly and quickly.*]

CALYPSO. Is this thy voice?

Put me upon my oath, and I'll swear false.
I tell you out of a sad heart the truth.
ULYSSES [*still hesitating*]. Who bore this message down?
CALYPSO. Hermes.
ULYSSES. A most
Garrulous god!
CALYPSO. He came from Zeus himself.
ULYSSES. And Zeus himself I trust not over-far.
Hurler of bolts! I speak it reverently.
[*Seizing her arm.*]
I will not loose you till you swear by Styx,
River of hell, the dreaded oath of gods.
CALYPSO. I swear to you by Styx, river of hell!
ULYSSES [*breaking away*]. O then the ship, the ship!
CALYPSO [*detaining him*]. A moment yet!
Kiss me, dear guest! My love for you is deep,
But ah! not deep enough to wish you home.
ULYSSES. The gods command: we mortals but obey.
CALYPSO. Why will you leave me? I must let you go,
But not without a reason: must I? Speak!
I do but ask the why of what must be.
[*He kisses her absently.*]
Is this Ulysses' kiss?
ULYSSES. Goddess, this news
Makes me forgetful.
CALYPSO. Worse and worse!
ULYSSES. Again.
[*Kisses her.*]
CALYPSO. This out of gratitude? And when you gaze
Into my eyes you see a world beyond.
[*He again moves to go.*]
Yet stay! I do not ask for the old look:
That's ended like a song. But I will know
Why you so burn to sail; why suddenly
I touch these arms of stone, this hand of flint,
Why suddenly your eyes peer seaward, why
All in one moment you are mad for home.

Is it your wife whom you at last remember?
If I could see her, I would understand.
ULYSSES. I'd not compare Penelope with thee.
She hath no skill in loving—but to love.
CALYPSO. And are her eyes dark; dark, yet with lightning?
Never a blue eye held a man like thee.
ULYSSES. I have forgot the colour of her eyes.
CALYPSO. Patient and fair and comfortable? yes?
Stands she as I do? Is her head so poised?
ULYSSES. How should a mortal like a goddess stand?
CALYPSO. And can she set a rose in bosom or hair?
ULYSSES. She hath a wisdom amid garden flowers.
CALYPSO. Doth she sing sweet?
ULYSSES. The songs of my own land.
CALYPSO [*suddenly*]. She hath forgotten thee, so long away.
ULYSSES. I would remind her with what speed I can.
CALYPSO. Remember, she is mortal: she must die.
ULYSSES. Therefore I flee the faster to her side.
CALYPSO. O what an end! You two will sit in the sun,
And challenge one another with grey hairs.
ULYSSES. And so to spare your eyes I would be gone,
Ere this my head to such a greyness grow.
CALYPSO. How shall my heart contend against your brain?
Now by that time I thought eternity,
By long sea-evenings when all words would cease,
By all the sad tales of thy wandering,
Sad tales which will be happy to remember,
Tell me the reason of this haste to go.
'Tis she, I know; I want no words to tell me.
ULYSSES. Why harp upon my wife? You being woman
Too much exalt the woman: a thousand calls
Are ringing in my ears: my mother pined—
CALYPSO. When did a lover heed a mother's woe?
ULYSSES. My father desolate or dead: my son—
CALYPSO. No father nor no son could launch that ship.
ULYSSES. My comrades, then!

[ULYSSES' *comrades meanwhile are wandering at back.*]

Whatever my inclining.
They still have homes which I must think upon
Who took them far.

CALYPSO. Friend hath killed friend for love.

ULYSSES. My empty throne and my neglected land:
Duty—

CALYPSO. O! hath it come to duty now?
We fence and fence about: tell me the truth.
Why are you mad for home? I'll have the truth,
Once and once only, but the living truth.

ULYSSES [*in a wild burst*]. Then have the truth; I speak as a man speaks;
Pour out my heart like treasure at your feet.
This odorous amorous isle of violets,
That leans all leaves into the glassy deep,
With brooding music over noontide moss,
And low dirge of the lily-swinging bee,—
Then stars like opening eyes on closing flowers,—
Palls on my heart. Ah, God! that I might see
Gaunt Ithaca stand up out of the surge,
You lashed and streaming rocks, and sobbing crags,
The screaming gull and the wild-flying cloud:—
To see far off the smoke of my own hearth,
To smell far out the glebe of my own farms,
To spring alive upon her precipices,
And hurl the singing spear into the air;
To scoop the mountain torrent in my hand,
And plunge into the midnight of her pines;
To look into the eyes of her who bore me,
And clasp his knees who 'gat me in his joy,
Prove if my son be like my dream of him.
We two have played and tossed each other words;
Goddess and mortal we have met and kissed.
Now am I mad for silence and for tears,
For the earthly voice that breaks at earthly ills,
The mortal hands that make and smooth the bed.
I am an-hungered for that human breast,

That bosom a sweet hive of memories—
There, there to lay my head before I die,
There, there to be, there only, there at last!

[CALYPSO *weeps.* ULYSSES *comes and touches her softly.*]

Remember, Goddess, the great while it is,
How far, far back, alas how long ago!

CALYPSO [*clinging about him*]. Now wilt thou leave me, now, close on the hour
Of silent planets luring us thro' dew,
And steady pouring slumber from the waves,
Wave after wave upon the puzzling brain?

ULYSSES. My wife, my wife!

CALYPSO. And, mortal, I will breathe
Delicious immortality on thee.
Stay with me, and thou shalt not taste of death.

ULYSSES. I would not take life but on terms of death,
That sting in the wine of being, salt of its feast.
To me what rapture in the ocean path
Save in the white leap and the dance of doom?
O death, thou hast a beckon to the brave,
Thou last sea of the navigator, last
Plunge of the diver, and last hunter's leap.

CALYPSO. Yet, yet, Ulysses, know that thou art going
Into a peril not of sky nor sea,
But to a danger strange and unimagined.

ULYSSES. I'd go down into hell, if hell led home!

CALYPSO [*resignedly*]. Call up your comrades! Bid them hoist the sails!

ULYSSES. Comrades! [*He lifts his arms and cries to his followers, who come running to him, leaving the* NYMPHS *on the shore.*] Great hearts, that with me have so long
Breasted the wave and broken through the snare,
Have we not eaten and drunk on magic shores?
Your hands here!

[*They crowd round him eagerly, some clasping, others kissing his hands.*]

COMRADES. O great captain!
ULYSSES. Have we not
Heard all the Sirens singing and run free?
COMRADES. Lead! lead!
ULYSSES. Close, close to me! have we not burst
Up from the white whirl of Charybdis' pool?
COMRADES. Storm-weatherer! mighty sailor!
[*They clasp his knees.*]
ULYSSES. What say you?
Shall we put forth again upon the deep?
COMRADES. We will go with thee even into hell!
[*They raise a great shout.*]
ULYSSES. Then Zeus decrees that we again set forth
And break at last the magic of this isle.
COMRADES. Yet whither—whither?
ULYSSES. Would ye see at last
Gaunt Ithaca?
COMRADES. Ah, God!
ULYSSES. Would ye behold
The bright fires blaze and crackle on your hearths?
COMRADES. Torment us not!
ULYSSES. Would you again catch up
Your babes?
COMRADES. Have pity!
ULYSSES. And clasp again your wives?
COMRADES. Cease! cease!
ULYSSES. Then homeward will we sail to-night.
COMRADES [*with amazed cries*]. Home? Home?
[*A wail of* NYMPHS *is heard on sands.*]
ULYSSES. Now lay the rollers under her,
And you make taut the ropes, you, hoist the sails,
And run her down with glee into the deep!
COMRADES [*rushing off in various directions*]. The ship! the ship! Ithaca! Praise the gods!
CALYPSO [*coming out with cup*]. The cup, Ulysses! Drink to me farewell!

ULYSSES [*taking cup*]. First unto Zeus that would not have us die,
But suffered us to see our homes again.
Farewell, Calypso, the red sun half way
Is sunk and makes a firelight o'er the deep.

CALYPSO. Remember me a little when thou comest
To thine own country. Say farewell to me,
Not to the thought of me!

ULYSSES. I will not. See!
The ship moves! Hark, their shouts! She moves! she moves.
Hear you the glorying shingle cry beneath her?
She spreads her wings to fly upon the deep!

[*The cries of* ULYSSES' *crew are heard as the ship is shoved down and they climb in.* ULYSSES *springs in and stands in the stern.*]

MEN. We float! we float!

ULYSSES. Now each man to the oar
And, leaning all together, smite the sea!
For it is fated we shall see our homes!

[*The ship puts off, and the wind raised by* CALYPSO *fills the sails.*]

CALYPSO. I breathe a breeze to waft thee over sea!
Ah, could I waft thee back again to me!

[*The ship gradually disappears, the joyous chorus of* ULYSSES' *boatmen dying off as the wailing of the* NYMPHS *becomes louder. A cloud gathers over the scene. The curtain descends, but rising again discovers the ship, now a black speck on red sunset, and* CALYPSO *standing alone looking after it across the sea. Wailing of* SEA-NYMPHS.]

[CURTAIN.]

ACT II

Scene I

A gloomy barren shore, with black broken cliffs and a few cowering trees: at the back the entrance to a vast cave. Enter Ulysses *slowly, armed and carrying a hunting spear; he gazes about him.*

Ulysses. A dark land and a barren! Hither urged
By strange and cold compulsion of the sea,
What hope for us of shelter or of food?
A grassless, fruitless, unsustaining shore!
I have outpaced my comrades. [*Calls.*] Phocion!
Elpenor! The gods lied to me who swore
That we should see our homes again. Yet now,
What breathèd sweetness as of blended flowers?
Nearer and nearer still!

[*Enter* Athene.]

Athene! Thou!
Preceded by the fragrance of thy soul.

Athene. Ulysses, know'st thou to what land thou art come?

Ulysses. I know not, but I know the gods did lie
Who swore that I should see at last my home.

Athene. The gods lied not, for thou shalt see thy home.

Ulysses [*eagerly*]. Ah!

Athene. If thou hast but courage to descend
Thither; to gather tidings of thy land
There, in the dark world, and win back thy way.

Ulysses. What world?

Athene. Doth not the region even now
Strike to thy heart? These warning cypress trees,
This conscious umbrage cowering to the ground,

The creeping up of the slow fearful foam;
Rocks rooted in the terror of some cry
That rang in the beginning of the world:
All nature frighted into barrenness.
Lo, mortal, here the very gate of death,
And this no other than the door of hell!

[ULYSSES *falls on his face.*]

Swoonest thou down, Ulysses? Wouldst thou see
Thy home?

ULYSSES. My home, alas!

ATHENE. Thither! Wouldst thou
Catch to thy breast thy wife?

ULYSSES. My wife, my wife!

ATHENE. Thither!

ULYSSES [*rising wildly*]. Who should endure this? Back to the sea!
Back to the wild sea! Farewell, Ithaca!
To the wild winds! Penelope, farewell!

[*Makes to go.*]

ATHENE. Ulysses!

[*He stops.*]

Hast thou that in thee which I
Have vaunted of thee 'mid the mighty gods,
And have stood surety for thee in high heaven?

ULYSSES. Hast thou no pity?

ATHENE. More than ever a woman;
But as my pity, so my pride in thee.

ULYSSES. Why unto me, to me alone, is heaven
For ever cruel? Have I not borne enough,
Cyclops and Sirens and Charybdis' whirl,
Ogre and witch and dreadful swoop of winds,
That hell now stands between me and my home?

ATHENE. The Power that is behind the gods decrees
To make a fiery trial of thy spirit.

ULYSSES. Is there no other way?

ATHENE. Thither alone,
Led by cold Hermes, who alone of gods

May pass that portal. Now, Ulysses, learn
What first must be encountered, and o'ercome.
Right in the threshold Hunger stands, and Hate,
And gliding Murder with his lighted face,
And Madness howling, Fear, and neighing Lust,
And Melancholy with her moony smile,
And Beauty with blood dripping from her lips.
Then shalt thou view the inmost house of woe,
And all the faint unhappy host of hell.
If these thou canst endure and pass, thou shalt
Hear tidings of thy home and of thy wife,
Emerge and come at last to thine own land.

ULYSSES. The gods lay on me more than I can bear.

ATHENE. Thy native shore!

ULYSSES. The darkness and the dead!

ATHENE. Thy warm fire-blaze!

ULYSSES. The grave and all the grief!

ATHENE. Voice of thy wife!

[*Faint wailings from the abyss.*]

ULYSSES. That crying from the deep!

ATHENE. Dare, dare it!

ULYSSES. Is it sworn I shall return
Upward and homeward?

ATHENE. In thy will it lies.
Thou, thou alone canst issue out of hell.

ULYSSES. Then? Then?

ATHENE. Thou shalt return. Zeus, give thy voice.

[*Thunder.*]

ULYSSES. I go!

ATHENE. Now thou art mine!

[*She vanishes.*]

COMRADES [*heard off*]. Ulysses! Where?

[*Enter* COMRADES.]

ELPENOR. We have found thee, captain!

ANOTHER. Does this land give aught
That we can eat?

ANOTHER. Or drink?

ANOTHER. O good roast flesh!

ANOTHER. Even bread were something.

ANOTHER. Great Ulysses, speak!

[ULYSSES *remains with fixed gaze on the entrance of the cave.*]

ANOTHER. What hast thou speared for supper, hunter fleet?

[ULYSSES *slowly turns and looks on them.*]

ULYSSES. Listen!

[*A sound of cries, at first faint, rises. They all come round him fearfully. Three times the cries arise, each time louder.*]

PHOCION. Who are they that cry up from the earth?

ULYSSES. The dead!

COMRADES. The dead!

PHOCION. And this? What is the place?

ULYSSES. We now are standing at the door of hell!

[*They shudder away from him in silence, all but* PHOCION.]

PHOCION. Come! come away!

ULYSSES. No! for I must descend. Thus only can we reach our homes again.

PHOCION. In every peril have I been with thee: Let me be with thee here!

ULYSSES [*tenderly*]. My Phocion!

ELPENOR. I am an old, old man! am long forgotten Even by my dearest. Let me go with thee!

ULYSSES. It may not be: leave me, and say no word!

[*They gradually disappear.*]

[ULYSSES *advances and peers into the dark. A long solitary cry causes him to reel back, and he seems to hesitate, when again* ATHENE *stands opposite him smiling. After a mute appeal to her for help, she vanishes. He again advances, but recoils as from some terrible sight.*]

HERMES [*within*]. Ulysses!

COMRADES [*from a distance*]. Ulysses!

[ULYSSES *after a moment's pause gradually and fearfully descends.*]

SCENE II

The descent into Hades. As the stage is darkened wailings are heard and a sound of moaning wind which ceases as Scene II discloses a world of darkness with all things impalpable, save for a precipitous descent dimly seen, and at its foot a livid river flowing, a black barge floating on it. There is a continual movement as of wings and flying things. A sudden flash of ULYSSES' *armour discovers him beginning to descend warily with* HERMES *in silence.*

ULYSSES. Darkness!
HERMES. Descend!
ULYSSES. Thy hand! I fear to fall.
HERMES. Thou, thou alone canst downward tread.
ULYSSES. But this!
Is it ocean, land, or air? I grope down, down!
[*Pauses.*] A whist world! but for whirring as of wings.
[*He looks down intently.*]
Is that a forest yonder, that sways and sighs
With a vast whisper? yet no trees I see.
And there, what seems an ocean: yet no wave!
The wonder of it takes away the fear.
[*They descend further.* ULYSSES *pauses as a faint cry is heard.*]
Listen!
[*Again the cry comes, nearer. Again, and nearer.*]
What cry, so feeble and so frail?
HERMES. It is the cry of children that died young.
The glitter of thy armour lures them toward thee.
[*The* SPIRITS *of* CHILDREN *flit about him with wistful cries.*]

ULYSSES. Little bewildered ghosts in this great night!
They flock about me—
HERMES. Wandering on their way
To banks of asphodel and spirit flowers.
ULYSSES. Ah, a girl's face! A boy there with bright hair!
He is new come and is not listless yet.
And thou dost make a little prattling noise
And hast not learned to speak!
A CHILD. O the bright armour!
ANOTHER. O father, bring us to the place of flowers!
ANOTHER. We have lost our way! Show us the grassy fields!
[ULYSSES *makes appealing gesture to* HERMES, *who stands silent.*]
ULYSSES. I cannot bring you, children, to those flowers.
[*The* CHILDREN *flit away with wistful cries.* ULYSSES *starts forward.*]
And 'tis not from the prattle of dead babes
I shall have tidings of my home, my wife.
Down and yet down!
[*Again they descend.*]
[SHAPES *of* FURIES *appear circling in the air.*]
Hermes, I am pursued,
But O by whom? As sharks to him that drowns,
They make toward me, sidelong swimming shapes!
I'll draw my sword.
[*He draws his sword and thrusts vainly at the* SHAPES.]
HERMES. What use to strike at phantoms?
The Furies these, who hurrying to the earth
To scourge the wicked, scent thee in mid-flight.
ULYSSES [*in terror*]. Over and over me! and round and round!
They'll search the guilt out in my secret soul,
Their eyes go through my body to my heart!
I am but a man! I am all black within!
They leave me, they lift their faces to the wind!
Upward they rush!

HERMES. A sudden scent from earth!

[*They again descend.*]

ULYSSES. More and more difficult—yet down and down!
And now I seem to wade, and now to part
Entangled branches, now pass through a cloud.
[*He pauses.*] Hermes, a sighing near my feet, as of reeds.
And now about me phantoms, men and women.

[PHANTOMS *of* SUICIDES *rise about him.*]

One hath a scarred throat, and that woman holds
Poison as in a phial—what are ye?

FIRST PHANTOM [*to* ULYSSES]. Thou, thou hast life in thee, and flesh and blood.
See, see the man is in the body yet.

ULYSSES. What are ye?

SECOND PHANTOM. Spirits of those who cast away
Sweet life and slew ourselves with violent hands.

[*The* PHANTOMS *circle about him.*]

FIRST PHANTOM. In madness I!

SECOND PHANTOM. And I in jealousy!

PHANTOM OF PHÆDRA. Me! Me! Knowest thou not me? Phædra was I.

ULYSSES. And art thou Phædra?

PHÆDRA. Give me back the sun
And all the scorn again! Only the sun!

FIRST PHANTOM. Seest thou that glimmer? there still gleams the world!

PHANTOMS [*together*]. Back: take us back! How soon these wounds would heal!

ULYSSES. O ye that being dead, so love the light!
Yet is there not some dear and favourite field,
Some holiest earth where each of ye would be?

PHANTOMS [*wheeling round*]. Ah, ah!

ULYSSES. Doth one of you perchance remember
A windy land that stands out of the sea
Gull-haunted, and men call it Ithaca?

[*The* PHANTOMS *float away with sad cries. A pause.*]

No! not from babes nor these who slew themselves

Wring I one word of that which I would know.
Ah! bring me to that ghost that shall reveal!

[*Again they descend, but* ULYSSES *pauses.*]

HERMES. Why tarry we, Ulysses.

ULYSSES. Hermes, this world
Begins to grip my heart with gradual cold!
O how shall I descend in flesh and blood
Unready and unripe? I have not died:
Therefore I fear! You gods, first let me have
The pang, the last sweat and the rattling throat,
The apparelling and the deep burying,
And die ere I descend amid the dead.

HERMES. 'Tis in thy will. Remember Ithaca.

ULYSSES [*with effort*]. Down, down! Yet terror hath ta'en hold on me.

[*The burning forms of* LOVERS *suddenly surround him.*]

O what are ye? What fire consumes you still?

FIRST PHANTOM. We are the spirits of lovers who still love.

ULYSSES. Did not the cold grave all that burning quench?

SECOND PHANTOM. No! for that fire did eat into our souls.

PHANTOM OF EURYDICE. Look upon me! I am Eurydice
That for one moment was so near the day,
When Orpheus backward looked, and all was night.
O lay me on his heart again!

[*The* PHANTOMS *wheel about him.*]

PHANTOM OF PROTESILAUS. Ah! come, Laodamia!

PHANTOM OF PHYLLIS. O Demophoön!

ANOTHER. O fire that dies not with our death!

ANOTHER. Alas!

ULYSSES. Do I not burn for a breast unreachable,
And languish for one voice I may not hear?
For her that weepeth by the rolling sea,
Penelope!

[PHANTOMS *disappear with wailings.*]

No answer still, no word!
That oath was hollow as this hollow world

Which said I should hear tidings of my home.
Where is that spirit that shall tell me?
HERMES. Lo!
The foot of the descent!
ULYSSES. Have I then come
Thro' hell at last: now surely—now to hear.
HERMES. No, for the river waits thee and the barge.
ULYSSES. What river?
HERMES. See! the creeping Stygian stream,
The mournful barge in which thou must embark
And drift thro' more tremendous torments, ere
Thou shalt have tidings of thy home and wife.
ULYSSES [*wildly*]. Is't not enough to have descended hither
Breathing and in the flesh? Now must I drift
Upon the dreadful river? Spare me, Zeus!
Athene, who didst never leave me yet,
Athene! hearken!—even she forsakes me.
O Hermes!
HERMES. None can aid thee but thy will.
ULYSSES [*with a cry*]. On, Hermes, on, even to the river of hell!

[*They approach the river, and* HERMES *enters the barge, but as* ULYSSES *is embarking* CHARON *starts forward oar in hand.*]

CHARON. Stay thou! The flesh still clings about thy limbs,
The blood runs in thy veins! Rash fool, forbear!
Here is no passage save for spirits! Back!
Back to the earth or fear some monstrous doom.
[*He thrusts* ULYSSES *aside.*]
HERMES. Charon! by heaven's permission comes this man.
Take thou thy oar and urge us down the stream

[*They begin to drift, and now they pass the woe of* TANTALUS *and the fruit.*]

Lo! Tantalus in his eternal thirst
Still reaching at the fruit he may not grasp.
See how the wind carries the branches from him.
ULYSSES. Ah! Tantalus, do I not reach and grasp not?

[*They pass the woe of* TANTALUS *and drift onward, when suddenly on the bank* TEIRESIAS *the Seer starts forward.*]

TEIRESIAS. Ulysses, art thou come, then? Is no toil
Too hard for thee that thou must drift thro' hell?

ULYSSES. Teiresias, prophet true! of all men thee,
Thee do I thirst to hear, now shall I know.
Shall I return unto my home at last?

TEIRESIAS. Thou shalt return.

ULYSSES. O Zeus!

TEIRESIAS. Yet with sheer loss
Of all thy comrades under tempest crash.

ULYSSES. Alas!

TEIRESIAS. And to a home of strife and storm;
To deadlier peril even than here in hell;
To danger and to darkness shalt return.

ULYSSES. And she, Penelope—does she still live?

TEIRESIAS. She lives.

ULYSSES. O thou kind heaven! and holds she true?

TEIRESIAS. She lives.

ULYSSES. O if thou hast a heart, though dead,
Thou wilt not leave me thus.

TEIRESIAS. She lives: farewell.

[*The* SHADE *of* TEIRESIAS *disappears; again they drift onward.*]

ULYSSES. "Lives" and no more is worse to me than "dead."
Would that I had known nothing! onward—on!
This fire he hath put in me I must quench!

[*They pass the woe of* SISYPHUS *and the stone.*]

HERMES. See Sisyphus that in his anguish rolls
Upward, ever, the stone which still rebounds.
Mark how the sweat falls, and what whirl of dust!

ULYSSES. Ah, brother, such a stone I roll in vain!
There is no torment here that is not mine.

[*They pass the woe of* SISYPHUS, *and again drift on.*]

ULYSSES. Is there not one of all these ghosts that throng
The bank, one only, that can tell me truth?
Hermes! yon spirit lordlier than the rest
With something in his pace familiar:
See how he cometh thro' the other shades
With such imperial stride and sovereign motion.
HERMES [*to* SHADE]. Stay thou!
[*The* SHADE *turns, disclosing the form of* AGAMEMNON.]
ULYSSES. Ah, mighty Agamemnon! king!
O royal 'mid the dead as in the light!
I am Ulysses: often we took counsel
Under the stars, in the white tents, at Troy.
Now speak to me: a living man I come
Amid the dead for tidings of my wife
Penelope. Doth she hold true to me?
AGAMEMNON. Ulysses, fear thy wife! Fear to return.
ULYSSES. What? What? O speak!
AGAMEMNON. Thy wife awaits thee now
Coiled like a snake to strike thee with her fangs.
ULYSSES. Unthinkable!
AGAMEMNON. She weaveth death for thee!
ULYSSES. Horrible!
AGAMEMNON. Look on me, me whom my wife,
False Clytemnæstra, lured unto the bath
And struck me here where now thou see'st the wound.
I that first night did bathe in my own blood,
The first night, the sweet night of my return.
ULYSSES. Penelope! I'll kiss thee and fear not.
AGAMEMNON. Never so sweet was Clytemnæstra's kiss
As on that night, her voice, never so soft.
[*The* SHADE *of* AGAMEMNON *disappears, and again they drift onward.*]
ULYSSES. Are these the tidings, these for which I dared
This darkness and the very river of hell?
I'll not believe it. O for some fresh voice!
On, on! I cannot hear worse words than these.
[*They pass the woe of* PROMETHEUS *and the vulture.*]

HERMES. Behold Prometheus, who stole fire from heaven;
Now at his heart the eternal vulture eats.
ULYSSES. Prometheus, on this breast too anguish feeds,
And on this heart swoops down the eating fear:
The fear lest I should find her false at last,
False, false after such sea, after such storm;
False tho' I stumble toward her out of hell.
You gods, impose some limit! Now to know,
To know if she be true, to know, to know!
[*They pass the woe of* PROMETHEUS, *and again drift onward.*]
SHADE OF ANTICLEIA [*unseen*]. Ulysses!
ULYSSES. Ah, who calls me by my name?
ANTICLEIA. Ulysses!
ULYSSES. And the voice, tho' faint it comes,
Is yet the voice of one that was a woman.
ANTICLEIA. Ulysses!
ULYSSES. And it goes through all my blood.
Hermes, there is one near me whom I loved:
A flitting shadow, and it comes and goes,
It stretches out its arms—the face—the face!
'Tis gone! Come nearer or come not at all!
Again! the first face that on earth I saw,
The shining eyes and the remembered smile!
Mother! [*He leaps onto the bank.*]
Here to this breast, here to this heart!
[*He makes to clasp her but the* PHANTOM *eludes him. Again he seeks to embrace her, but in vain.*]
ANTICLEIA. Thou canst not touch me, child. I cannot fold thee
For all my yearning. O to have thy head
Again upon this bosom! but alas!
I now am but a shade and a shadow that glides.
ULYSSES. Mother, thy kiss!
ANTICLEIA. These were the lips that kissed thee,
This was the very breast which gave thee milk,

And this the voice that sang thee into sleep.
ULYSSES. What brought thee to thy death?
ANTICLEIA. Waiting for thee,
Waiting and weeping, and long wondering.
ULYSSES. Alas, alas! and mother, she? she lives—
But stays she true to me?
ANTICLEIA. Child, I have come
But lately to this place, and when I died
Still was she true to thee, and knew not time.
ULYSSES. At last, at last the word that lighteth hell!
One word! and thou alone, mother, couldst speak it!
Thy voice alone: thine out of all the dead!
ANTICLEIA. It seems no farther off than yesterday
That she and I were standing hand in hand
Looking for thee across the misted sea.
[ULYSSES *weeps.*]
But child, tho' lately I did leave her true,
What hath befallen since? Ulysses, home!
I am aware of tumult in thy halls,
Confusion and a roar of hungry voices,
And peril closing round Penelope:
Fierce peril, child! O hasten!
ULYSSES. Ah! what peril?
ANTICLEIA. I know not: but the time is short: she hath
Swift need of thee: haste, haste! tho' how I yearn
To keep thee for a little comfort! yet
Home, get thee home!
ULYSSES. Farewell, mother—farewell!
[*The* GHOSTS *begin to surge about him.*]
ANTICLEIA. Speed, speed!
[ULYSSES *rushes to the foot of the descent and stumbles upward, a multitude of* SHADOWS *swarming with cries about him.*]
ULYSSES. She lives, and she is true to me.
But she hath need of me! Up to the earth!
[GHOSTS *wheel about him with cries.*]

O whirling dead! And a great swirl of souls.
Wife! wife! I come.

[*Cries.*]

Ithaca! Ithaca!

[*Fiercer cries.*]

I gasp and fight toward thee! Still endure!
Think me not dead! O hear me out of hell!

[*Fiercer and louder cries of the whirling dead.*]

Ah! shall I reach that glimmer? Upward, up!
Faint not, Penelope: faint not, endure!

ACT III

Scene I

The seashore of Ithaca veiled in a sea-mist, the pent-house in front of the hut of Eumæus *the swineherd dimly visible up stage.* Ulysses, *aged by suffering and exposure, is lying asleep under a tattered sea-cloak; on one side of him stands* Athene, *on the other* Poseidon.

Athene [*with outstretched arm*]. Depart, Poseidon! Thou canst vex no more
Ulysses, who now sleeps on his own shore,
By hunger withered and by tempest wrung,
From toil to toil, from hell to shipwreck flung.
Here let thy buffetings and fury end!

Poseidon. He shall not rest! Even here his limbs I'll rend:
Back to the foam-path shall the man be hurled,
To plunge and tumble on the watery world!

Athene. Let Zeus then from Olympus give a sign,
And thunder answer to my prayer or thine.

Poseidon [*raising his hands*]. Father of gods! to me be vengeance given,
That none henceforward mock the might of heaven.

Athene. Father, permit the man peace in his home,
And lift at last the wandering curse of foam.

[Zeus *thunders*, Athene *makes gesture to* Poseidon.]

Poseidon. Highest, I hear thy thunder and obey!

[*Going.*]

Woe to all ships I meet upon my way.

[*Exit* Poseidon.]

ATHENE [*bending over* ULYSSES]. At last I ease thy bosom
of its sighs,
And close the tribulation of those eyes.
Soft as a sister over thee I bend,
Mortal, and move as an immortal friend.
There is no earthly burning in this breast,
No fever, but this love is rich in rest;
The wistfulness of women I may feel,
And mine the faithful smile, the hands that heal;
But what in them is passion falls from me
Only as dew doth in benignity.
Yet once more will I try thee, to make clear
If yet thy wit is nimble; and appear
As a young goatherd from the pasture near.
[*Turning before she goes.*]
Hath the wave rusted thee or damped thy skill?
Of all thy tasks the fiercest waits thee still,
Ere I restore thee, at the destined time,
To armèd splendour of thy manhood's prime.
[*Exit* ATHENE.]

ULYSSES [*dreaming of past labours*]. Ah, loose me to that
music! Cut these cords!
Hark! breakers thro' the gloom! Reef, reef the sail!
[*He wakes and gazes about him.*]
Some god hath cast me forth upon this land;
And O what land? So thick is the sea-mist,
All is phantasmal. What king ruleth here?
What folk inhabit?—cruel unto strangers,
Or hospitable? The gods have lied to me
When they foretold I should see Ithaca.
This is some swimming and Cimmerian isle,
With melancholy people of the mist.
Ah! Ithaca, I shall not see thee more!
[*He sits down in dejection.*]

[*Enter* ATHENE *disguised as a young goatherd with a cloak and a staff.*]

ULYSSES. Sir, I pray you tell me what land is this?

ATHENE. First tell me, sir, of yourself, and from what country you are come.

ULYSSES [*with rapid affable mendacity*]. My name is Neleus and in Crete was I born; my father Melampus, and my mother Arcite. But I, sir, have a man's blood on my hands and therefore am fugitive, and seek refuge here if any may be found.

ATHENE [*aside in delight*]. He hath his tale on the instant!

ULYSSES. But now tell me what is this shore on which I am cast up?

ATHENE. Hast heard men speak of Ithaca?

ULYSSES [*repressing sudden joy*]. Ithaca!
Somewhere have I heard the name, but where?
And is this Ithaca?

ATHENE. Even so.

ULYSSES. Is it an island or part of the mainland?

ATHENE. An island surely. And hast thou heard never of our king? He is far-famed.

ULYSSES. How is he called?

ATHENE. Ulysses.

ULYSSES. Ulysses! Did he not sail with other chiefs against Troy city?

ATHENE. Even so. But now we know not if he be alive or dead.

ULYSSES. I fear that he is dead.

ATHENE. Hast any certain news?

ULYSSES. None certain, but I much fear that he is drowned in the salt sea.

ATHENE [*delightedly*]. Yet might his wife entertain thee kindly.

ULYSSES. His wife—[*checking himself*]. Ah! had he a wife?

ATHENE. Surely—her name Penelope.

ULYSSES. Penelope! and it seems to me that her name too I have heard.

ATHENE. O! well said, Ulysses. Thou art never wanting.

ULYSSES [*starting*]. Stranger!

ATHENE. I am Athene, and have taken this shape but to try thy wit.

ULYSSES. Goddess, how shall men know thee? And yet while thou wast speaking I was aware of a tone more sweet than mortal; but would not betray thee.

ATHENE. O excellent Ulysses, who standest there and fearest that thou art dead! I have more joy in thee than before, for thy craft is in no way abated.

ULYSSES. But ah! I am fooled again! Goddess! Is this Ithaca indeed—this very earth?

ATHENE. Behold!

[*The sea-mist slowly unrolls, discovering the land.*]

ULYSSES. Slowly the mist fades! Ah! the cypress tree
I was so proud to plant as a boy; and there
The cave forbidden which I therefore loved!
Brighter, more bright! The crest of Neriton!
The rustling glade there where I killed the boar.
Now all the land gleams: look you there! the ridge
Where the young laughing babe Telemachus
First clapped his hands at sight of the sea: and O!
Yon holy winding path where last I kissed
Penelope, who toward me swayed and spoke not.
I came there down the slope most lingeringly,
And turned by the myrtle tree, and turned and turned.
Goddess, I cannot see for the great tears.
There! there! the very peak to which she climbed
Waving a sea-farewell with helpless hands!
O verdure to the sea-man that's come home!
O light upon the land where I was born!
O dear, dear Earth, thou warm mother of me,
Art glad, art glad in thy brown bosom; here
I kiss and kiss thee: here I fling me down
And roll and clasp and cover me with thee!

[*Starting up.*]

Ah! 'tis a dream: O God, it is a lure!
Incredible that ever I can rest!

I am fooled by the old sea-magic: my home trembles:
An apparition of the glassy deep,
A fading island that we come to never!
Is it rooted, rooted fast and cannot fly?
I shall go mad if I am fooled! Speak! speak!
Is this the earth, the earth where I was born?

ATHENE. Ulysses, 'tis at last, 'tis Ithaca!

ULYSSES. Ah! [*Sobs, overcome by emotion, then slowly.*]
I have been but a little while away then,
And suffered the great sea as in a dream.
But she, Penelope? She lives, I know,
And she holds true: but peril closes round her—
What peril?

ATHENE. Up, Ulysses, from the ground!
Art broken down? Fury, not tears, I ask!
Up, up! thy wife by suitors is beset
Who waste and strip and drink away thy home:
She is hard driven and on the point to yield.

ULYSSES. Dogs! Dogs!

ATHENE. Wilt thou not rush upon them straight
And slay them? smite, and on the instant?

ULYSSES. No:
I'll crouch before I spring, spy ere I leap.

ATHENE. O wise, still wise! Now have I tried thee sure,
Rage doth not make thee rash! No more I doubt.
Now bow thy back! and cast on thee that cloak.
Thou art so marred with the sea misery
That none will know thee: lean thee on this staff,
And as a beggar knock at thy own door,
And weave in thy own halls these wooers' doom.

[*Going.*]

ULYSSES. Now dost thou leave me, in so fierce a pass?

ATHENE. I'd see thee stand alone; 'tis sweet to those
In heaven at seasons to withhold their aid.
But I am ever with thee, unto the end.
Strike not, Ulysses, till I send the sign.

ULYSSES. What sign?

ATHENE. A lightning flash: till then forbear.

ULYSSES [*assuming his disguise and recognizing the hut of Eumæus*]. Ah! the old swine-hut: lives Eumæus yet?

[*Exit* ATHENE.]

[*He walks slowly towards the hut.* EUMÆUS *is heard within: "G-r-r Antinous, in Eurymachus, g-r-r Ctesippus."* EUMÆUS *comes out to the pent-house in front of the hut, carrying a pointed stick.*]

EUMÆUS. Away, old beggar! Here are no leavings for you!

ULYSSES. Sir, but a handful of husks that the swine have left.

EUMÆUS. Out! These are Ulysses' swine: they leave nothing.

ULYSSES. Sir, I fall with hunger.

EUMÆUS. And so perhaps even now does my master.

ULYSSES. I have tidings of your lord Ulysses.

EUMÆUS. That's an old tale with you beggars—you have all seen Ulysses, and then you are well fed by his queen Penelope. [*He begins making a mash for the swine*]. One saw him in Troyland, another in Crete, another saved him from drowning, another saw him drown but could not save him. One hath a lock of his hair, another the string of his sandal. Dost carry anything of his about thee?

ULYSSES. I do.

EUMÆUS. And what?

ULYSSES. His hunger.

EUMÆUS. Away, you saucy beggar, or I'll loose his dogs on you: yet no. His wife will be wroth if any are turned away who can tell of Ulysses. Is thy lie ready, is it a good lie?

ULYSSES. Sir, I beseech you, food!

EUMÆUS. Come in, then, and earn thy supper. I am not fooled like a woman: fill that jar with water, and pick up these fallen acorns. [ULYSSES *obeys.*] Where hast thou seen him then? There is but one place where he has not been seen—

ULYSSES. What place is that?

EUMÆUS. In hell: I recommend hell to thee: no beggar hath yet bethought him of hell.

ULYSSES. But this would not please his wife?

EUMÆUS. No, but 'twould set her mind at rest concerning him. Here's a piece of fat chine for thee.

ULYSSES. Humbly I thank you.

EUMÆUS. His swine are well kept still—

ULYSSES. And for that I thank you.

EUMÆUS [*prodding swine outside*]. G-r-r-r Antinous, Ctesippus; in Eurymachus.

ULYSSES. Are swine so called?

EUMÆUS. I name these three after the chief suitors, and when rage swells to bursting, I strike them so: a poor vengeance, but ready at all hours. Ulysses! Ah! year after year have I been faithful to thee, master, and of each of thy swine can I give account!

ULYSSES. But he being far off, thou hast no need to be overcareful.

EUMÆUS. I have the greater care because of the smaller need.

ULYSSES. But if he be dead!

EUMÆUS. I'll not believe that till I hear it from his own lips.

ULYSSES. But this Ulysses—so I have heard—was but a careless ruler, and little beloved.

EUMÆUS. Old man, hast a mind to finish thy supper?

ULYSSES. I have indeed: for my hunger is no whit abated.

EUMÆUS. Then let no ill word escape thee of Ulysses, or thou wilt go hungry away!

ULYSSES. And his queen, Penelope?

EUMÆUS. She, poor lady, is so driven by the rascal wooers that this very night is she to choose one of them for husband.

ULYSSES. This night?

EUMÆUS. Yea, indeed, for this night the moon is at the full.

ULYSSES. Take me to her, even now: my hunger is gone from me.

EUMÆUS. Come, then, for the sky pales toward twilight! [*A sound of running is heard.*]

Hark!

ULYSSES. A sound of running, and the feet run across my heart. [*Aside.*]

EUMÆUS. Back! 'tis Telemachus, Ulysses' son, rushing hither; and see, men pursuing him to take his life. Ah! that spear grazed his neck. Master, master!

[*Enter* TELEMACHUS *breathless, faint with running.*]

TELEMACHUS. Eumæus, let me die here in this faithful spot! I am pursued by men set on by the wooers; I cannot turn; from each bush they start. I'll die here with my face to them: but you—ah, old man!

EUMÆUS. An old beggar with the old tale of your father.

[*The pursuers appear: two or three hang back, and two follow to the door of the hut.*]

TELEMACHUS. Fly, old man.

EUMÆUS. They are upon us.

TELEMACHUS. Father, let me die as thy son should.

ULYSSES [*a beating at the door*]. Stand back! Within, both of you! I will speak with them.

TELEMACHUS. Wilt die then?

ULYSSES. I do not intend so. In! I'll have my way.

[ULYSSES *from entrance of hut approaches the foremost of the two pursuers.*]

ULYSSES. Sir, sir, I die of hunger—I pray you.

FIRST MAN. Out of my way, old dog! Pylas, in!

ULYSSES. Thus do I clasp your knees and entreat.

FIRST MAN. Loose me, rags!

[ULYSSES *tightens his grip.*]

ULYSSES. I will not loose you till you give me food.

FIRST MAN. Help, Pylas, help! his arm holds like iron! Help, help, he pulls me down like a hound at my throat.

[ULYSSES *hurls him down and springs at his throat.*]

TELEMACHUS. Take not his life: he is a hired thing. Who set you on to murder me?

PYLAS [ULYSSES *suffering him to rise*]. Eurymachus.

TELEMACHUS. Ah, he whose arm is ever around my neck.

[ULYSSES *releases* PYLAS, *who limps away.*]

SECOND MAN. I'll fly a land that breeds such beggars as this.

TELEMACHUS. Thou hast saved me—me, who am not of thy blood.
Thou hast o'ertasked thy strength and tremblest: lean
On me: give me thy hand.

ULYSSES [*aside*]. I fear to touch it.

TELEMACHUS. Still thou art trembling. Come!

[*Again holds out his hand.*]

ULYSSES. Suffer me, sir,
To kiss this hand.

[*He kisses* TELEMACHUS' *hand and bows over it.*]

TELEMACHUS. Sorrow not thus, old man! Lift up thine eyes.

ULYSSES. I cannot yet: thine arm!

[TELEMACHUS *leads him a step or so.*]

There hath been a time
When I had led thee thus, ay, step by step.

TELEMACHUS. Thou hast not looked into my face once.

[ULYSSES *looks slowly up into his face, laying both hands on his shoulders: he looks long on him, then bows his head.*]

ULYSSES. Ah!
Thou art the son of Ulysses, art thou not?

TELEMACHUS. Ay, of Ulysses, him that comes not back.

ULYSSES. I saw thy father on a lone sea-isle
Once, and he spoke thy name.

TELEMACHUS. O what said he?

ULYSSES. Only thy name. He looked o'er the wide sea,
And softly said, "Little Telemachus."

TELEMACHUS [*dashing tears from his eyes*]. Thou hast seen him! art the nearest thing to him.

ULYSSES. And I had a sacred word from him to thy mother.

TELEMACHUS. Come tell it to her now, ere 'tis too late;
Suitors like wolves about her howl; and she
Must choose this very night of the full moon.

ULYSSES. Haste, haste!

EUMÆUS [*coming out*]. Old man, a cup of wine for thee,
Thou'lt have no further need of any lie.
Thou hast saved her son, and thou art sure of supper.

ULYSSES [*drinking*]. Is this Ulysses' wine?

[EUMÆUS *nods.*]

'Tis a good wine.

[*He sets cup down suddenly, pointing to the sky, in which the full moon has become faintly visible.*]

The moon, the moon: come. [*He starts to go.*]

EUMÆUS. How didst thou guess
That way leads to the palace?

ULYSSES. I came here
Once as a boy, long since: my father brought me.

[EUMÆUS *retires again within the hut.*]

Young sir, a moment: and this way—apart.
We two are going into mighty peril,
And the end who knows? now lest we meet no more,
Wilt thou not kiss this grey head once? may'st thou
Never such sorrow know as I have known!

[TELEMACHUS *bends over* ULYSSES' *head and kisses it.* ULYSSES *is shaken.*]

From here thy palace roofs can we descry:
See'st thou that upper chamber looking south?
There wast thou born upon a summer night.

TELEMACHUS. But thou then?

ULYSSES. I stood by the door in fear.

[*He throws back the tattered cloak and raises himself to his height.*]

Child, I begot thee.

TELEMACHUS. Father, art come home?

[*He falls in* ULYSSES' *arms.*]

ULYSSES. Askest thou proof?

TELEMACHUS. I feel that thou art he:
I know it in every vein and drop of blood.
Thou art ragged?
ULYSSES. But to weave these wooers' doom.
TELEMACHUS. Eumæus, hither! my father is come home.
EUMÆUS [*appearing at door*]. Hast thou no likelier tale for me than that?
Call me not from the pig-mash.
TELEMACHUS. Hither and see.
[EUMÆUS *comes down.*]
Dost thou not know him?
EUMÆUS [*gazing at him*]. Sir, I know you not.
ULYSSES. You that are human know me not: and yet
If Argus my old hound should see me now,
Though he were dying he would wag his tail.
EUMÆUS [*confusedly*]. Argus, old Argus!
ULYSSES. And for further proof,
The scar made by the boar in yonder glade!
[*He bares his knee.*]
EUMÆUS [*embracing his knees*]. O master, O my man of men—at last!
ULYSSES. Rise, 'tis no time for tears. Ye'll go with me?
EUMÆUS. To death.
ULYSSES. Yet I mistrust ye.
TELEMACHUS. Father!
ULYSSES. Not
Your love: I doubt your wisdom and your craft.
When ye shall see me buffeted, reviled,
Ye will forget I am a beggar man.
EUMÆUS. We will revile thee more and taunt thee worse.
ULYSSES. Can ye be very patient? for I know not
As yet what I shall do: I wait the sign
From her, that goddess who hath brought me hither.
TELEMACHUS. We will be very patient till the end.
ULYSSES. Come then: but I will enter last, alone.
Remove you every weapon from the hall,
But leave three spears, three shields, upon the walls

That we may snatch them when our need is come.
Now haste— [*They start to go.*]
Yet stay; if any ask of you
Why ye have thus removed the spears and shields
Have ye bethought you of your answer?

TELEMACHUS. No.

ULYSSES. Then say ye have removed them lest the smoke
Should tarnish them!

EUMÆUS. Master, I know thee now.
Thy old craft!

[*The full moon at this point shines forth brightly.*]

ULYSSES. Lo, the moon already bright!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II

Interior of the banqueting-hall in ULYSSES' *palace. The walls richly decorated and encrusted with coloured patterns, bosses and friezes of animals, etc. Two columns plated with bronze sustain the roof, the central part of which is raised so as to admit the light. On a wall hang the three spears and three shields as ordered by* ULYSSES, *and in another place his bow in a richly-decorated case. The hall is lighted by lamps held by* ATTENDANTS. *The main entrance from without is through a doorway with a raised threshold in the centre of the stage at the back: this door stands open to the vestibule and the moonlight: a staircase on the left leads up to another door opening into the women's apartments. A dais extends along the back of the hall: on this and on the floor to right and left are disposed the tables and couches where the* SUITORS *are discovered revelling, with the faithless* HANDMAIDENS *interspersed among them and drinking from their cups, and* ATTENDANTS *standing by and serving.* TELEMACHUS *sits at the head of one of the tables. In the centre of the hall is an open space, with a fire burning on the hearth in the*

midst, and beside it the chairs of PENELOPE *and the Minstrel, the former unoccupied.* PHEMIUS, *the Minstrel, is seated in his chair by the hearth, singing—*

Great is he who fused the might
Of the earth and sun and rain
Into draughts of purple light,
Draughts that fire the heart and brain:
Let us praise him when the goblets flash in light
And the rapture of the revel fills the brain.

What were revel without wine?
What were wine without a song?
Let us hymn the gift divine
With a music wild and strong,
With a shouting for the god who gave the wine,
And a guerdon to the minstrel for his song.

Blest is he who strikes the lyre
At the feast where princes quaff:
Higher mounts the mirth and higher,
Loud and louder peals the laugh—

[PHEMIUS *breaks off suddenly, gazing on the* SUITORS *in horror while a dim mist comes down on the hall and the moonlight is obscured.*]

ANTINOUS. What ails thee, man?

EURYMACHUS. Why dost thou stare on us?

PHEMIUS. O wretched men! What doom is coming on ye?
What mist is this that overspreads the world?
Shrouded are all your faces in black night!

[*They laugh together softly and sweetly.*]

See how the feast is dabbled o'er with blood,
And all your eyes rain tears, and though ye laugh
Sweetly on me, ye laugh with alien lips!

[*Again they laugh sweetly upon him.*]

And a voice of wailing arises and all the walls

Drip fast with blood, yea, and with blood the roof!
[*They laugh again.*]
And the porch is full, and full is the court of ghosts
And spirits hurrying hell-ward in the gloom,
Yea, and the light hath perished out of heaven!
Laugh not so idly on me with your lips,
But arise and flee! your doom is at the doors.

[PHEMIUS *hurries out of the hall. The mist clears and* ULYSSES *is seen standing on the threshold in the central doorway unobserved by any.*]

ANTINOUS. Madness is come upon him!
EURYMACHUS. O, a poet!
CTESIPPUS. He hath taken from me all desire for food.
And there! is that blood there? Eurymachus!
Am I not rosy and round as ever I was?
EURYMACHUS. You are, Ctesippus.
CTESIPPUS. And I see no ghosts.
ANTINOUS. He hath drunk o'ermuch: hence all this mist and blood.
EUMÆUS [*to* TELEMACHUS]. O master, see you that old beggar man?
Say, shall I put him from the door? Out, out!
[*With exaggerated roughness.*]
ULYSSES [*coming down into the hall*]. I crave a word, sir, with Ulysses' son.
Which is he?
EUMÆUS. There!
ULYSSES [*approaching* TELEMACHUS *humbly*]. Suffer me, sir, a word!
I bring you tidings of your father.
TELEMACHUS [*with simulated harshness*]. O!
The old tale!
ULYSSES [*cringingly*]. Sir!
TELEMACHUS. Out with thee!
EUMÆUS. Out!
TELEMACHUS. Or stay!
Thou shalt have leave to limp from guest to guest

And eat what thou canst beg. As for your tale,
My father is long dead.

ULYSSES. Then first from you
I beg a crust of bread, or sip of wine.

TELEMACHUS. Here's for thee.

[*Tosses him bread.*]

ULYSSES. Humbly, sir, I thank you

[*He passes from guest to guest.*]

A SUITOR. Here.

[*Pushes wine-cup to him.*]

CTESIPPUS. My appetite is fled: take what you will.

EURYMACHUS. Here is a gristly morsel for old gums.

MELANTHO [*to* ANTINOUS, *as* ULYSSES *approaches*]. An
tinous, keep the old man far from me!
He'll soil this robe; and hath a smell of swine.

ULYSSES. I would not soil you, lady; but you, sir—

ANTINOUS. You louting beggar, I have nought for you!
From me!

[*He strikes him on the mouth.*]

EURYMACHUS. He stood thy buffet like a rock!

ULYSSES. O my deep soul, endure!

TELEMACHUS [*starting up*]. Antinous,
I'll have no beggar struck within my halls!

ANTINOUS. Oho! And did I strike one of thy blood
Or of thy guests? Thou filthy beggar, off!

[*Strikes him again.*]

ULYSSES. Athene, patience!

EUMÆUS. All my blood boils up.

[*Throws log savagely on fire.*]

ULYSSES [*coming near to* ANTINOUS]. O noble sir, of a
who feast around,
Tall men and fair, thou art the fairest far,
And splendid in thy youth and in thy strength.
But I am old and many have I seen
So fair, so strong, fallen into misery,
Princes whom in their pride the gods laid low.
Remember in thy strength the evil days.

ANTINOUS [*starting up*]. This dismal beggar I'll endure no more,
Who gibbers at the feast of evil days.
Away with him or I will hurl him forth.
CTESIPPUS. A sad feast this—the minstrel first sees blood:
And now this beggar croaks to us of age.
CLYTIE. Since he came in we are all grown miserable.
MELANTHO. Sirs, drive him forth, that we may laugh again.
SUITORS [*rising from the tables*]. Out with the old crow! cast him out: away!
[*They come round* ULYSSES *and hustle him to the door.*]
TELEMACHUS. I say the old man shall not be thrust forth.
[*Aside to* ULYSSES.] Is it now, father, is it now?
EUMÆUS. When, when?
SUITORS [*hustling* ULYSSES]. Out with him!
HANDMAIDS. Spit on him!
SUITORS. Unloose the dogs!
CTESIPPUS [*interposing*]. A word, a word! thy mother still delays:
Let us beguile the time; leave him to me,
And we'll wring laughter from this kill-joy yet.
[*To* ULYSSES *with mock deference.*]
Give me your hand, old man!
[*To* SUITORS.] These beggars all
Were princes once. Now hearken! Sir, I see
Behind these rags and filth what man thou art.
Tell us—and now I look on thee I mark
A something noble in thy air—thou hadst
A palace once, and riches, hadst thou not?
ULYSSES. A palace and great riches had I once.
[*General laughter.*]
CTESIPPUS [*to* SUITORS]. What said I? Yet in rags the great are known.
Wast thou not in old days thyself a king?
ULYSSES. In the old days I was myself a king.
[*All laugh heartily.*]
CTESIPPUS [*to* SUITORS]. Hush!

[*To* Ulysses.] Look around; even such a hall hadst thou
Ulysses [*gazing slowly around*]. Once did I feast in some
such hall as this.
Ctesippus. Not by thine own fault (ah! I know it well)
But by some anger of the gods thou art fallen.
Ulysses. The gods, the gods have brought me to this pass
Antinous. Impudent liar!
Ctesippus. And thou didst leave behind
A wife most beautiful, a queen of women!
Telemachus. How long will he endure?
Eumæus. O for a blow!
Melantho. He is grown cautious, he'll not speak to that
Clytie. His wife! Some addled hag that tendeth swine!
Melantho. Was woman found to mate her with such mud
Telemachus. His spirit is dead in him.
Eumæus. Thou art broken at last
Clytie. He speaks not! See, the old fool's eyes are dim
Melantho [*with mock caress*]. O shall I kiss thy tears
away, my love?
Chloris. Thy wife is old: wilt thou have me, fair youth?
Clytie. O wouldst thou take me, bridegroom, to thy halls
Eurymachus. Cease, cease! Ye all mistake. He hath
come here
A suitor for Penelope.
Antinous [*throwing cup at him*]. Then take
This gift to aid thy suit.
A Suitor [*throwing a bowl*]. And this.
Ctesippus [*throwing a scrap from the feast*]. And this.
Others [*casting things upon him*]. And here: and here.
Ctesippus. Now up and urge thy suit
Telemachus [*to* Eumæus]. Why wait a word that never
comes? The swords!
Eumæus. Stay, stay: he looks on us, and his eye burns.

[*Enter* Penelope *down staircase from the upper chambers;
she walks slowly and sadly to her chair beside the hearth
in the centre of the room.*]

SUITORS [*making way for her and then gathering to right and left of her in the central space*]. The Queen, the Queen!

ANTINOUS. Now be the bridegroom chosen!

EURYMACHUS. Lady, this is the night when thou shalt choose.
Grave is thy mien: here's that shall make thee smile.
Bring forth this wooer lordliest and last.

CTESIPPUS. These rags are but a guise: a noble man!

PENELOPE [*to* TELEMACHUS]. Child, knowest thou this old man whom they mock?

TELEMACHUS. Mother, it is an old poor beggar man
Who says that he brings tidings of my father.
Wilt thou not hear him, mother, ere thou choose?

EURYMACHUS. Art thou still eager, lady, for new lies?

ANTINOUS. Art thou not weary of these beggars' tales?

PENELOPE. I have been too oft deceived: now my still heart
I bare no more to every beggar's eye:
Sacred shall be this hunger of my soul
And silent till the end—
[*To* TELEMACHUS, *who makes signs to her.*]
What wouldst thou say?

TELEMACHUS [*taking her apart*]. Mother, a word; but a word.

ANTINOUS [*interposing*]. Stand back, young sir!
There shall be no more plots between you two.
[*Murmurs of assent.*]
Nor beggars weave another web—of lies.
The moon is full! Now shalt thou choose at once.

TELEMACHUS. Mother!

ANTINOUS. An end of tricks!

SOME SUITORS. Thy word, thy word!

OTHERS. Now answer!

OTHERS. Now no more delay!

ALL. Choose, choose!

[*They all crowd about* PENELOPE *to hear her decision,* ULYSSES *in the meantime crouching in the ashes by the hearth.*]

ULYSSES. Goddess, hast thou forsaken me at last?
TELEMACHUS [*to* ULYSSES]. A moment, and too late!
ULYSSES. I wait the sign
PENELOPE. Speak any then who will: I'll answer him.
CTESIPPUS. I claim to speak the first.
EURYMACHUS. By right of age.
CTESIPPUS. Lady, I cannot speak as a raw boy,
But as a man of comfortable years;
Though in my youth more terrible was none
To foemen; and I like not to remember
The blood that I have spilt. Behold me now
A man not old, but mellow, like good wine,
Not over-jealous, yet an eager husband.
This figure something of Apollo lacks,
But though I might not catch the eye of a girl,
Still a wise woman would consider well,
Ponder by nights ere she would let me go.
Yet I would urge less what Ctesippus is
Than what Ctesippus has the power to give.
[*To* ATTENDANTS.] Now hold up to the moon that glimmering robe;
Turn it this way and that; this coffer now,
With armlets of wrought gold, brooches of price,
And golden bowls embossed with beasts and men;
These draught-boards, ivory inlaid with silver,
That glistering tire and these enamelled chains.
Lo, whatsoever woman can desire
I'll give thee without pause and without stint,
Wilt thou but suffer me to lead thee home.
PENELOPE. Ctesippus, not the glory of gems or gold
Can move me: hath the sea a pearl so rich
As dead Ulysses which it treasureth
Far down, far from these eyes? Rather would I
Possess some rag of him drawn up perchance
By nets of seamen hauling 'neath the moon
Than all these jewels glistering at my feet.
How couldst thou think to please me with these toys,

When in that chamber I have garnered up
Garments more rich to me, faded and dim,
Old robes and tarnished armour lovelier far?
Those hadst thou seen, thou couldst not offer these.

EUMÆUS [*to* CTESIPPUS]. Now thou hast leave to go—
[*Murmurs.*]
Your pardon, princes.

EURYMACHUS. Lady, I bring no gauds of pearl and gold,
I know thou art not this way to be lured.
I share thy grief for him who now is dead:
Noble was he, a wise man and a strong.
O were he here, I first would clasp his hand.
A moment till my voice return to me.
[*He bows his head on his hands.*]
But she who sits enthroned may not prolong
The luxury of tears; nor may she waste
In lasting widowhood a people's hopes,
So hard is height, so cruel is a crown.
Thou art a queen: a moment then for grief;
Then for the people what remains of life.
I offer thee the comfort of high cares,
And consolation from imperial tasks:
To share with me the governance of a land
And bring thy woman's insight to the state,
The touch that's gracious, deft, and feminine.
Sea-gazing consort of a hero dead
Reign thou with me; and find in rule relief!
That thou no longer art a girl, and green,
Troubles me not; rather I prize thee more
For that long suffering and sleeplessness
And the sweet wisdom of thy widowhood.
Thou hast caught splendour from the sailless sea,
And mystery from many stars outwatched;
Rarer art thou from yearning and more rich.
Humbly I would entreat you for my answer.

PENELOPE. Sir, could I list to any, 'twere to thee:
Fair were thy words, and such as women love,

And thou hast found my brain, but not my heart,
Feigning a ruth I felt thou didst not feel.
Ask me not to forget in public good
This solitary, dear, and piercing loss.
Rather would I remember one dead man,
Wasting the years away, and yet remember,
Than rule a living kingdom by thy side.
Alas! I am a woman utterly!

ANTINOUS. Enough of jewels, and enough of thrones!
Would these men lure thee? I by thee am lured.
For thee, O woman, thee alone, I thirst.
Time, that doth mar us all, and dims, and damps,
Ashens the hair and scribbles round the eye,
Weareth not thee, thou miracle, away,
Ever in beauty waxing without wane.

TELEMACHUS [*aside to* ULYSSES]. Dost thou hear, father?

ULYSSES. Goddess, now the sign!

ANTINOUS. Or, if thou will not, I'll compel thee.
[*Murmurs.*]
O!
I care not for your murmurs: I risk all!
Come now away! or on the instant I
Will catch thee in these arms up from the ground
And fling thee o'er my shoulder, and run with thee
As from a house aflame.

TELEMACHUS. I'll spill thy blood.

ULYSSES. Unleash me, goddess, let me go.

EUMÆUS. Up, up!

ANTINOUS. For what dost thou still wait? For whom, for whom?
Thy husband? he is dead, drowned in the ooze:
The fish are at him now in the deep slime.

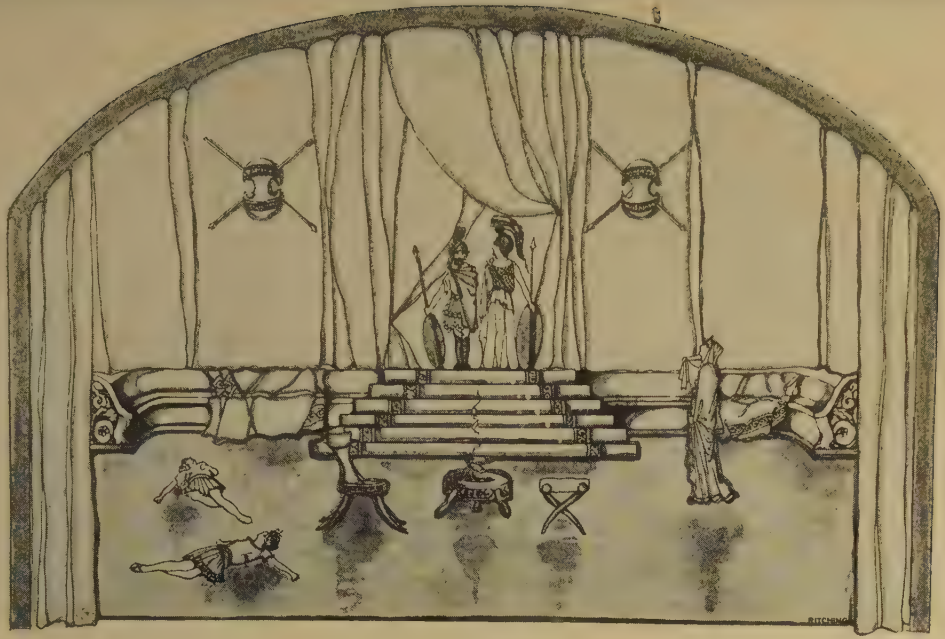
PENELOPE. O!

TELEMACHUS [*to* ULYSSES]. Art thou tame?

ULYSSES. I bite these bloody lips.

ANTINOUS. Or if he be not dead, what is he now?
A shambling shadow, a wrecked, mumbling ghost,
A man no more: no better than yon beggar
That huddles to the fire: so bowed, so worn,
So ragged and ruined, and so filthy and fallen!
Look on that beggar! There thy husband see!
PENELOPE. Splendid Antinous, I tell thee this;
That if my husband on this moment came
In by that door even as yon beggar man,
So bowed, so worn, so ragged and so fallen,
Him would I rather catch unto this heart
And hold his holy ruins in my arms,
Than touch thee in thy glory and thy strength.
ULYSSES [*starting up*]. O nobly spoken!
[*Uproar.*]
Suffer an old man!
ANTINOUS. Now answer.
EURYMACHUS. Lady!
CTESIPPUS. Bring those robes again!
PENELOPE [*bewildered*]. Sirs, but one moment, will you give me leave?
Then do I swear by all the gods to choose.
A womanish last request—a silly favour!
ANTINOUS. O!
EURYMACHUS [*fawning upon her*]. Lady, I will not refuse thee.
PENELOPE. 'Tis
That I may satisfy me if this beggar
Perhaps doth bring me tidings of Ulysses.
ANTINOUS. This but to put us by!
EURYMACHUS [*still fawns*]. Suffer her, sirs!
[*The* SUITORS *retire sullenly.* PENELOPE *comes back to her seat at the fire beside which* ULYSSES *crouches. As she approaches him he trembles.*]
PENELOPE. Old man, wilt thou deceive me yet again?
Be not afraid: there's nought in me to fear.

ULYSSES. I'll not deceive, thee, lady: nearer draw
And motion all away!
[PENELOPE *signs to all to move away.*]
Canst thou endure
The shaft of sudden joy, yet make no cry?
PENELOPE. Though I shall fall I'll not cry out: say, say!
ULYSSES. Ulysses lives—thou art gone white—be still!
Grip fast thy chair and look upon the ground!—
And he is very near to thee even now.
PENELOPE. Where, where?
ULYSSES. This night is he in Ithaca;
Perchance even now is rushing to his halls;
Might at this moment come in by that door.
PENELOPE. How shall I trust thy tale? If thou sayest true
Thou ne'er shalt beg again.
ULYSSES. I come from him.
PENELOPE. What is thy name?
ULYSSES. Idomeneus from Crete.
He charged me with these tidings—and this ring.
PENELOPE. This would he not have given: O this was pulled
From his dead finger!
ULYSSES. Lady, if I lie—
If on this night Ulysses comes not home—
Then give me to thy thralls to slay me here.
PENELOPE. Ah! they will kill him.
ULYSSES. Fear not; he is wise.
Only do thou each moment still delay
Thy answer.
PENELOPE. Yet what plea?
ULYSSES. Propose to them
Some simple trial whereby thou mayst choose.
PENELOPE. What, what?
ULYSSES. The bow: is that Ulysses' bow?
PENELOPE. Cherished and daily suppled by these hands.
ULYSSES. Say thou wilt choose whoe'er shall bend his bow.
But still to interpose some brief delay,
Call you some woman forth to bathe my feet.



ULYSSES

Reunion of Penelope and Ulysses

PENELOPE. Melantho, bring clear water hither and bathe
This old man's feet.

MELANTHO. I? I'll not touch his feet,
For I can touch the lips of better men.

ULYSSES. Lady, some woman that hath seen much sorrow
As I have.

PENELOPE. Eurycleia, bathe his feet.

[EURYCLEIA *brings water in a brazen vessel to* ULYSSES; *as he lifts his robe she sees the scar and drops the basin.*]

EURYCLEIA. The scar there.

ULYSSES. Wouldst thou slay me? hold thy peace.

PENELOPE. What ails thee, Eurycleia?

EURYCLEIA. O my mistress!
These old hands tremble even at such a task.

ANTINOUS [*advancing*]. Now, lady, now! This is delay enough!
Hast thou at last heard tidings of thy lord?
Doth he come home to-night?

PENELOPE. Alas, alas!
He is drowned, and from his finger, lo! this ring.

ANTINOUS. Thou'rt satisfied at last?

SUITORS. Now answer: choose.

PENELOPE. No one of you I like above the rest,
Yet have I sworn to choose: so I will put
This matter to a simple trial.

SUITORS. What?

PENELOPE. See where behind you hangs Ulysses' bow.
He that can bend his bow and loose a shaft,
Him will I take as husband from you all.

[*They rush to take it.*]

SUITORS. The bow!

PENELOPE [*staying them*]. My son alone shall reach it down,
After such time shall be the first to touch it.

[PENELOPE *retires to watch the trial.* TELEMACHUS

brings down the bow and a sheaf of arrows. CTESIPPUS *advances, and after much groaning and panting fails to string it.*]

CTESIPPUS. Easily in the morning could I bend it,
But I have supped!

[EURYMACHUS *essays to string it and fails.*]

EURYMACHUS. Lady, wilt choose a husband
For brutish force? what play hath the mind here?

[ANTINOUS *fails to string the bow.*]

ANTINOUS. If I can bend it not, no man can bend it.

PENELOPE [*to* OTHERS]. And will you not essay? or you?

OTHERS. Not we.

ANOTHER. Where craft and strength have failed, what use for us?

PENELOPE. I will wed no man till he bend that bow.

[*Angry murmurs among the* SUITORS.]

[*Lightning flashes;* ULYSSES *recognizes by the sign that the moment for action has come.*]

ULYSSES [*rising*]. Lady, and princes, but to make you sport,
I will essay to bend Ulysses' bow:

[*Loud laughter.*]

To make you sport—for I have supped full well.

ANTINOUS. Impudent rags! Thou shalt not vie with us.

TELEMACHUS. The beggar shall make trial: come, old man!

CTESIPPUS. The old man! excellent!

ALL [*laughing loudly*]. The beggar man!

EURYMACHUS. Come forth, thou wooer lordliest and last.

ANTINOUS. Here is a broad mark for thy shaft, old man.

PENELOPE. Ah, mock him not!

ULYSSES. Sirs, but to make you sport.

[*He totters towards the bow.*]

Athene, strength! O if my might should fail me!

[*He takes the bow, and after simulated faltering, strings it amid the amazed silence of the* SUITORS. *He springs to his height, and appears in his own likeness, his rags falling from him, and disclosing him armed and in the full glory of manhood.*]

Dogs, do ye know me now?

PENELOPE [*rushing towards him*]. Ulysses!

ULYSSES. Back!

SUITORS [*amazedly amid themselves*]. Ulysses! is it he? Is it he—Ulysses?

[ULYSSES *shoots, killing* ANTINOUS, *who falls.*]

ULYSSES. Who is for me? The swords there and the shields!

[TELEMACHUS *and* EUMÆUS *snatch down the weapons, and arming* ULYSSES *and themselves, stand by him.*]

EURYMACHUS [*coming over fawningly from among the* SUITORS *towards* ULYSSES]. Hero restored, I'll stand by thee for one!

ULYSSES [*striding out and spearing him*]. Wouldst fawn on me? go fawn among the dead.

[EURYMACHUS *falls. The* SUITORS, *finding no weapons on the walls, crowd waveringly together.*]

CTESIPPUS [*encouraging them*]. We are ten to one: crush, crush them by sheer weight.

[*The* SUITORS *make a headlong rush upon* ULYSSES *and his companions, but are stayed in mid rush by thunder, lightning, and supernatural darkness, followed by the apparition of* ATHENE *standing by* ULYSSES.]

SUITORS. The gods fight for him. Fly! we are undone.

[ATHENE *and* ULYSSES *with* EUMÆUS *and* TELEMACHUS *fall on them, and they are driven in fierce brief medley, visible by flashes of lightning, and with noise of groans and falls, out headlong through the door. Sounds of slaughter continue to be heard from the court without. The darkness lifts, discovering* ULYSSES *standing on the threshold at the upper end of the hall,* ATHENE *still at his side. He turns, laying by sword and shield, while* PENELOPE *gazes in passionate uncertainty toward him from the corner of the hall.*]

ULYSSES [*solemnly*]. First unto Zeus and to Athene praise! Go all of you apart! even thou, my son,

And leave me with Penelope alone.

ATHENE. Thou art come home, Ulysses! Now farewell!
For violated laws are here avenged,
And I, who brought thee through those bitter years,
Those bitter years which make this moment sweet,
I, even, in this moment have no share.

[ATHENE *disappears.*]

[ULYSSES *and* PENELOPE *slowly approach each other across the hall, with rapt gaze, hesitatingly. Then she is folded to his breast in silence, while the voice of the* MINSTREL *is heard without, repeating the words of the song from the first Act,*

And she shall fall upon his breast
With never a spoken word,

and the fire on the hearth, which has burnt low throughout this scene, leaps up into sudden brightness.]

[CURTAIN.]

NOTE BY THE AUTHOR

The methods and limitations of epic and drama differ completely: and in attempting to write a play on the story and character of Ulysses, as they are known to all the world from the *Odyssey* of Homer, the first thing needful is to sacrifice five-sixths at least of the episodes which give that poem its enchantment. Some writers who have made the attempt have even judged it best to omit the entire tale of the hero's wanderings, and to treat only those of his actions which take place after his return to Ithaca. Both M. Ponsard, in a lyrical drama written to Gounod's music, and Mr. Robert Bridges, in his poetical play, *The Return of Ulysses,* have followed this plan.

As the reader has perceived, I have gone farther back in the story, and taken in two of Ulysses' earlier trials, the sojourn with Calypso and the visit to Hades, which seemed to me to afford matter for telling dramatic presentment and dramatic contrast. And I have tried to weave these adventures, together with the return to Ithaca and the final discomfiture of the suitors, into the fabric of a properly knit play; with what measure of success it must be for readers and playgoers to decide.

For the rest, the scholar will have found in the foregoing scenes some things strictly according to Homer, and some loosely so: but others not according to him at all, as for instance the stay with Calypso made to precede the descent among the dead instead of following it; Calypso herself endowed with some of the attributes of Circe; Hermes, the chartered escort of the dead, given as a guide to Ulysses through Hades; Hades itself conceived on lines which are Virgilian rather than Homeric; the action at the swineherd's hut, and that in the palace at Ithaca afterwards, re-arranged, re-

imagined, and above all unsparingly accelerated and cut down. In the author's mind all these liberties were an essential part of his dramatic scheme; nor can the need for similar liberties be well escaped by any practical playwright who chooses to work upon materials supplied either by history or by epic.

[1]As to the material presentment of the play, my warmest thanks are due to Mr. Tree for an enthusiasm and a generosity which have admitted no obstacle in the attempt to realize on the stage the best conjectural picture of the Homeric world which could be devised. The attempt is new, and the result is a spectacle richer, more barbaric, many-coloured, and full of fantasy than could have been obtained by adopting the conventional classical costumes and familiar building styles of later Greece. The architecture and its decoration, designed by Mr. W. R. Lethaby, have been based on recent discoveries of the Mycenæan age. For the dresses (since the Mycenæan costume, so far as it is known to us, would be ill suited to the stage) Mr. Percy Anderson has gone back to the very earliest Greek sculpture, and to vases of the sixth and seventh centuries B.C. Both these gentlemen, as well as the author and manager and their valued helper Mr. Lionel Hart, have been greatly aided in their work by the zeal and learning of Dr. A. S. Murray, Mr. Sidney Colvin, and other friendly authorities of the British Museum.

S. P.

[1] What follows refers to the manner in which Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree produced *Ulysses* at Her Majesty's Theatre in London, in 1902.

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER *

A Biblical Drama in One Act

By

ELMA EHRLICH LEVINGER

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INTRODUCTION

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER

Jephthah's Daughter won a prize in the contest conducted recently by the Drama League of America to provide dramatic material based on the Bible. Elma Ehrlich Levinger, the author, was born in Chicago. She took special work in English at the University of Chicago and studied at Radcliffe under Professor George Pierce Baker. While she was in Cambridge her one-act play *Kid* was presented by the Harvard Dramatic Club and later produced professionally at the Keith Theatre in Boston. Mrs. Levinger is at work now on another Biblical play, *The Sons of Jacob*. She has also published several volumes of stories.

The story of Jephthah's daughter is related in Chapter XI of the book of *Judges*. The Biblical narrative runs thus:

Then the spirit of the LORD came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over unto the children of Ammon. And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou wilt indeed deliver the children of Ammon into mine hand, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, it shall be the LORD's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering. So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and

the LORD delivered them into his hand. And he smote then from Aroer until thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities and unto Abel-cheramim, with a very great slaughter. So th children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel

And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neithe son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, tha he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou has brought me very low, and thou art one of them that troubl me: for I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I canno go back. And she said unto him, My father, thou hast opene thy mouth unto the LORD; do unto me according to that whic hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hat taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the childre of Ammon. And she said unto her father, Let this thing b done for me: let me alone two months, that I may depart an go down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I an my companions. And he said, Go. And he sent her away fo two months: and she departed, she and her companions, an bewailed her virginity upon the mountains. And it came t pass at the end of two months, that she returned unto he father, who did with her according to his vow which he ha vowed. . . . And it was a custom in Israel, that the daughter of Israel went yearly to celebrate the daughter of Jephthah th Gileadite four days in a year.

The fate of Jephthah's daughter has appealed to poet as well as to dramatists. It is interesting to compare wit Mrs. Levinger's play, Louis Untermeyer's treatment of th same theme in his latest volume of verse.[1] From hi *Daughters of Jephthah* the following lines are quoted fo purposes of comparison:

[1] *Roast Leviathan,* New York, 1923.

I

Jephthah was judge and chief in Israel,
His arm was iron, his voice a great bronze bell.
Alone, in passionate prayer upon the heights,
He saw the leagues of armored Ammonites
Flash in the sun like a malignant sword,
And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord:
"If you will grant me life and victory
And bring proud Ammon down, then shall it be
That whatsoever comes from out my doors,
The first to greet my glad return, is yours;
It shall be God's, a gift from chief to King,
And I will burn it as an offering."
So Jephthah slept and in the morning woke
To find new strength. The Lord's red trumpets spoke
In Jephthah's battle-cry; he whirled and broke
The glittering line beneath his army's heel.
He saw the massive columns bend and reel
From Gilead and Minnith; saw them fly
Through twenty towns, his own troops rushing by
Like storm on spray, like rain pursuing foam . . .
So Jephthah came to Mizpeh, to his home.

II

Knotting her hair in two black braids,
Jephthah's daughter dismissed her maids;
The kiss of flute and dulcimer,
Voicing their pretty pains . . .
". . . I will not have it so!
I want to stand in such a gale
Until my blood shouts with the cries
Of all the wounded, those who fail
With victory in their grasp, the songs
Of outcasts quivering with their wrongs,

The leper's dirge beyond the pale,
The clang of bolts, the creak of thongs,
The drums of all defeat . . . the ecstasy
Of losing all and giving utterly—
Lord, let such music ring through me! "

As if in answer to her cry,
A word ran through the halls, a high
Murmur of sudden victory.
The rumor blazed. She sprang to ..
With swifter flames. " Lord, can th
The windy fire to set me free?
Girls! Let the holy lights be lit!
Bring drums and torches! Scatter flowers
On the dark earth in brilliant showers!
Arouse the singers! Let the bands
Strike the harp with bolder hands!
Let light and air run through the house!
Put brighter fillets on your brows,
So that the dusty saviours meet
Rejoicing arms and laughing feet.
Shiver the cymbals! Let us dance
The dance of our deliverance! "
Between the crouching hills they came.
She saw their banners' snapping flame;
She knew her father's buoyant stride;
She was the first to reach his side.

III

Jephthah felt suddenly old and alone;
His bones were water, his face was stone.
" Sheilah, I called you; Sheilah, the one
Who is demanded! " and, undone,
He told her of his vow.
And Sheilah spoke:
" Why should you grieve for me, now that the yoke

Is lifted? Do you not recall the price
Asked of a patriarch for sacrifice?
I know whose anguish found triumphant voice,
Not the rapt father's but the offered boy's.
Such rapture will be mine and I grieve now
Only because my father made his vow
Without r[illegible] in his mind. I was not meant
To serve as pathos for an accident.
Look [illegible]e, father, smile and let me go
Up [illegible]hills awhile so I may know
T[illegible] prepare myself, how to award
[illegible]pirit's ecstasy unto the Lord."

FOR SUPPLEMENTARY READING

Louis Ginsberg, *The Legends of the Jews,* Philadelphia, 1913, Vol. IV, Chapter II. Mrs. Levinger has used some legendary material drawn from this source in her play.
C. F. Kent, *Biblical Geography and History,* New York, 1920.
W. S. Landor, *Iphigenia,* in *Hellenics.*
Stephen Phillips, *The Maiden on the Mountains; The Daughter of Jephthah on the Mountains.* (Both of them are in the volume *Panama and Other Poems,* New York, 1915.)
N. P. Willis, *Jephthah's Daughter.*

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

What form does the dramatic conflict take in this play?

What characters in Mrs. Levinger's play are not found in the original narrative in *Judges?*

How does Louis Untermeyer's lyric treatment of the story differ from Mrs. Levinger's dramatic treatment?

Dramatize the episode of the sacrifice of Isaac. Compare your work with the old miracle play on the same subject.

Why is the subject of Jephthah's daughter one which has appealed to many writers?

Compare the sacrifice of Iphigenia at Aulis with the story of Sheilah. Iphigenia was a favorite heroine in the drama of the ancient Greeks. What Greek writers of tragedy used this story?

What practical steps might be taken to construct the setting and costumes indicated in the illustration?

CHARACTERS

JEPHTHAH, *a man of Gilead.*
SHEILAH, *his only child.*
ELAD, *his father.*
DINAH, *Sheilah's old nurse.*
AMASA, *an elder in Israel.*
NATHAN, *his son.*
RACHEL, *Amasa's daughter.*
ZEBUL, *the singer.*
JOSIAH, *comrade of Jephthah.*
MICHAL, TIRZAH } *young girls of Mizpeh.*
SOLDIERS, *people of Mizpeh.*

TIME: *A spring morning in the days of the Judges.*
PLACE: *Before the house of* JEPHTHAH, *on the road to Mizpeh.*

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER

The house of JEPHTHAH *is a humble, low-roofed affair with several flat stones forming the stairs; rude stone pillars either side the door. A few rocks forming a natural rostrum. We hear a girl's voice singing, within the house, a weirdly impassioned chant of battle and triumphant pride, strangely blended with religious fervor. Still singing,* SHEILAH *comes out of the house, the lap of her scarlet robe heaped high with flowers which she twines among the garlands already about the posts. She is a slender, dark girl of about sixteen, now shyly dreaming, now running over with youth and happiness. Tissot has drawn her well in his tanned, vibrant young Jewess with the thoughtful eyes. As she works, she sings half absently the old song of her people, the song of Miriam by the sea, improvising, now and then, her voice thrilling with joyful pride.*

SHEILAH. The Lord is my strength and my song
And He is become my salvation;
Him will I praise from morning until evening;
The Lord has heard the sound of my lamentation;
He has given ear unto my cry:
Therefore will I exalt Him without ceasing.
Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?
Who is like thee, glorious in holiness,
Fearful in praises, doing wonders?

The Lord is my strength and my song
And He is become my salvation ;
He has set my foot upon the neck of those who hated me,
He has decked me in their robes of blue and purple,

Therefore will I exalt him without ceasing,
Therefore will my praises ascend by day and by night.

[DINAH *comes from the house, a wrinkled woman with graying hair, but vigorous and upright. She addresses the girl always with a sort of chiding tenderness.*]

DINAH. Shame, idle child, shame! Why did you run away and leave me with the hearth unswept and the dough still within the kneading trough? [*Grumbling.*] A pretty damsel to rule the home—and you are woman grown! [SHEILAH *laughing saucily over her shoulder, gives a final pat to her garlands, and, taking some bread from the flat straw basket upon the steps, begins to scatter crumbs to the birds.*]

DINAH [*with increasing wrath*]. You pay less heed to me than to the chirping of those noisy sparrows. Come in at once and help me with my tasks, lest all Mizpeh say I let you run as wild as a goat upon the hills. Come in, I say!

SHEILAH [*shaking her off laughingly*]. Nurse, nurse, leave me in peace and give your scolding tongue a holiday, for is it not high festival in Mizpeh? [*She runs up the steps to rearrange a loose garland.*] Surely, I should twine these doorposts with garlands when my own father is returning from battle to-day and all Mizpeh will strew flowers before his victorious feet.

DINAH [*still grumbling*]. Ay, at last the folk of Mizpeh know his worth. Those who spit on our poor house when passing will fling wide the city's gate at his coming and call themselves his friends.

SHEILAH. The lords of Mizpeh have grown his friends—nay, his bondmen. My father went forth an outcast; he will return a king. [*Swaying as in a triumphant dance, a garland above her head.*] He has overcome Ammon! The garments of the princes of Ammon are become a carpet to his feet that he may come as a king unto Mizpeh.

DINAH [*shaking her head gloomily*]. Yea, rejoice in the

thoughtlessness of your youth. Dance and sing in triumph and never a thought of your mother who will not be with the others at the city's gate to sound timbrels to his glory.

SHEILAH [*with a sudden change of mood, gravely tender as she throws herself beside* DINAH, *now seated on the doorsill*]. Poor mother! If she had not died when I was born—if she might only stand among the women and hear him praised in the gates. Perhaps, it might redeem a little the years of misery she spent for his sake.

DINAH [*soothing her*]. Nay, my little one, forget the jeers and the injuries. Your mother was woman grown when she wedded, and she knew what grief awaited her as the wife of Jephthah, an outlaw in Israel.

SHEILAH [*indignantly*]. My father's shame was not of his own making!

DINAH. Surely, he suffered for no sin of his own. But the sons of Elad, his father, could never forget that Jephthah was the son of a woman of Moab and they hated him for it. His youth was made bitter as the child of a strange woman; when he grew to manhood and found a maiden brave enough to be his wife, her brethren drove them out of Mizpeh with stones and curses.

SHEILAH [*with scorn*]. And for this bridal blessing, for the long years of hatred for him and his, my father avenges himself—by saving his persecutors from Ammon. Less generous would I have shown myself to those who scorned me.

DINAH [*chuckling*]. Generous! Nay, daughter of Jephthah, your father showed himself a shrewd maker of bargains. Ere he buckled on his armor, did he not exact heavy payment from Gilead? Did he not demand full recognition as son of the tribe—nay, more, that if he brought low the children of Ammon, he should rule as a king in Mizpeh?

SHEILAH [*rising and gravely bowing before an imaginary monarch*]. Greeting to you, O lord and king? Enter the gates of our city and be ruler over Mizpeh. Greeting to you, O warriors of Israel, who have saved us out of the hand of Ammon.

DINAH [*dryly, as she rearranges several garlands*]. And greeting to Nathan, son of Amasa, right hand of Jephthah in battle, flower of the youths of Mizpeh!

SHEILAH [*half angrily*]. Cease, Dinah—

DINAH [*with shrewd humor*]. Why should I hold my peace when every tongue in Mizpeh wags with your secret? Even before the sons of Gilead cried on Jephthah for aid, every old wife in Mizpeh knew that Nathan, son of Amasa, had pleaded with your father for your hand.

SHEILAH [*protesting*]. We are not betrothed.

DINAH [*teasingly*]. It were well you wore the bridal veil to-day to hide your blushes—even at his name. Your father himself told me that should young Nathan prove himself worthy in battle—

SHEILAH. He never told me of his love.

DINAH [*with a grimace*]. These eyes are growing dim. But they could read his face when he bade you farewell and begged you for a trinket to wear in battle. [*Pulling aside one of the girl's long sleeves.*] Where is the golden bracelet your mother wore upon her wedding day?

SHEILAH [*looking away*]. I—

DINAH [*smiling*]. He will bring it back to-day and you will wear it again—and the ring of betrothal also.

SHEILAH. I would not have him see me so meanly clad, when all the maids of Mizpeh wear their festal robes. [*Her arms about* DINAH, *she speaks pleadingly.*] Dear Dinah, help me plait my hair and let me don fair robes that I may do grace to those who return triumphant from the wars.

DINAH [*who has been resting on the doorsill again, rises, grumbling*]. Must I leave my work unfinished to deck you? You are fair enough in these.

SHEILAH. I would be like a queen before Mizpeh. [*Petting* DINAH.] You will surely unlock the chest in which years ago you laid away my mother's bridal robe and the jewels she wore upon her bridal day. [*As* DINAH *hesitates and shakes her head.*] My father said that they should all be mine when I

was a grown woman. Surely, he would be pleased to see me wear them upon this day of days.

DINAH [*grumbling, but eager*]. Yes, you must have them. They will suit you well, though you are less stately than your mother . . . and not half so fair. [*She looks away wistfully, dreaming.*] But you shall be decked like a princess on her bridal day, for the time has come.

SHEILAH [*half afraid*]. I am but a simple maid. Perhaps I should not wear my mother's bridal garments.

DINAH [*soothing away her fears*]. You are a child no longer —little one. [*Drawing her up the stairs.*] Come in with me . . . not stately like your mother . . . but the robes will suit you well. [*As they stand in the doorway,* RACHEL, MICHAL *and* TIRZAH, *three young girls, laughing and radiant, their arms filled with flowers, run in.*]

RACHEL. Sheilah, Sheilah, why have you not joined us at the city's gate? We are waiting for your father—

TIRZAH. We must make haste—

MICHAL [*holding out her hand*]. Hurry—hurry—

SHEILAH [*proudly, but without anger*]. Once, Rachel, you were not so eager to be my friend and playmate. You even censored Nathan, your brother, for crying out to me, as I passed, to join in your games.

RACHEL. That was long years ago. To-day—

TIRZAH. To-day you are the proudest woman heart in all Mizpeh. Come, forgive us our past mockery and join our festal procession to greet your father.

MICHAL [*taking* SHEILAH'S *hand timidly*]. Surely, you forgive us.

SHEILAH [*with a happy laugh*]. To-day I must forgive you —and all Mizpeh—for I am so happy. [*She bends down and kisses little* MICHAL'S *upturned face.*] I am glad you will be my friends—I have been hungry for love and friendship all my days.

DINAH [*cynically*]. Ay, we all pay homage even to the dog—if he protect our sheepfold. [*As the girls, laughing and*

talking among themselves, are about to drag off SHEILAH.] Shameless one—have I not taught you better than to run before the gathered folk with tangled hair and in unseemly garments?

SHEILAH [*dancing back to her nurse*]. Girls, I will join you at the city's gate. But first—ah, wait until you see me in my queenly robes. [*With a mock salaam.*] In paying me homage you will forget even my father's glory.

TIRZAH. You will be late—

SHEILAH. Nay, I will be with you to lead the festal dance before my father. [*The girls run out laughing and talking.* SHEILAH *is about to follow* DINAH *when she stops a moment, her eyes on the distant hills, her face glowing with joy.*]

SHEILAH [*her voice a little hushed at the beauty of it all*]. Ah, Dinah, it is good to be alive on a spring morning when the birds are building their nests and singing of golden summer days. [*Her voice breaking a little.*] I am so happy I want to run and dance and laugh—and cry. For soon my father will return to me, no longer an outcast, but as a king over all Gilead.

DINAH [*with gentle satire*]. And with him Nathan, king of men.

SHEILAH [*simply*]. And Nathan, the youth who played with me, although the others laughed, and helped me search for the first shy flowers many springs ago.

DINAH [*kissing her*]. Come, let me deck you in your mother's bridal robes, for the time has come. [*They go into the house together. A moment's pause. A group of soldiers, among them* NATHAN *and* JOSIAH, *enter and pass across the stage toward Mizpeh. Last of all come* JEPHTHAH *and his father,* ELAD. JEPHTHAH *is a mighty man, broad of shoulder, bull-throated, clad in armor. His eyes are keen as a sword; about his mouth the shameful years have left bitter lines not even his present pride can erase.* ELAD *is a bent old man with a calm, cold face. He walks with a staff and sinks upon the rocks to rest.*]

JEPHTHAH [*with mocking gesture*]. Welcome to Jephthah's

palace, O father. It has long been the target of the stones and curses of my neighbors. [*His face softens as he notices the garlands about the doorposts; he touches one caressingly.*] My little Sheilah's handiwork. The one thing in all the world to love me when I wore the brand of shame.

ELAD [*wincing at the unspoken reproach*]. How could *I* acknowledge you before the people?

JEPHTHAH. Surely, there was little pride in being father of the foreign woman's son. But to-day—[*with a swift gesture*]—ah, to-day, I cast aside my ancient shame and my ancient hatreds. My tribe that once cast me out will receive me with timbrels, with singing and with garlands of victory. [*Lifting one of the garlands from the door.*] Nay, more: they will keep their bargain and I will be more than a son of Gilead; I will rule the people and dwell as a king in Mizpeh. Have I not done well, O my father?

ELAD. Yea, too well.

JEPHTHAH [*about to enter the house, comes back to where* ELAD *sits*]. I do not understand.

ELAD. I fear the good fortune which raises a man from the dunghill to the throne. The Lord when He gives too generously with one hand, withdraws with the other. He has given you all too bountifully of glory—He will demand payment.

JEPHTHAH. Let Him demand payment and I will pay.

ELAD [*shaking his gray head*]. Beware of idle boasting lest you stumble in your pride. The Lord God is not as a merchant in the marketplace that you can bargain with Him.

JEPHTHAH. Nay, let Him demand payment and I will mete out to Him with just weights and a just measure. Did I not demand payment of the men of Gilead? And have they not paid? Shall I be less honest even with the Lord?

ELAD [*rising*]. He may demand heavy payment. O my son, I am fearful for you. Perhaps, too fearful; but since my Simeon fell in battle yestermonth, I have no son but you and I tremble lest misfortune cross the doorsill of your house. All my hopes lie in you and Sheilah, the last of our blood in

Israel, seeing that you have no other child and all my other sons are dead.

JEPHTHAH [*throwing off his slight foreboding*]. See—I have only to stretch forth my hand and I grasp—[*catching one of the loose garlands*]—victory, glory, praise before the sons of Gilead. True, as you say, I have risen from the dunghill. [*Exultantly.*] But who can drag me from my throne?

ELAD [*quietly*]. God!

JEPHTHAH [*proudly*]. Let Him call me to account and I will answer Him according to His reckoning.

ELAD. Vows made in storms are forgotten in calms. What of your vow?

JEPHTHAH [*his face suddenly sharp and troubled*]. My vow? Perhaps I did indeed do evil in His sight to vow rashly and seek to bribe the living God? [*Unconsciously, he grips his sword, as the battle lives again before his eyes.*] Near midnight and we had waged battle against Ammon since sunrise. My men exhausted, bleeding, nigh unto death. My sword arm weak and wounded. From the hills pale fires burning where those of Ammon offered up sacrifices to their gods and prayed for victory. Could I have done otherwise, O my father?

ELAD. Beware false vows which lead to shame and dishonor. The vow which God has heard must be fulfilled.

JEPHTHAH [*sweeping on*]. Leaning upon the arm of Nathan, son of Amasa, I groped my way from the field. I had thought to fall on my sword, for I dared not fall alive into the hand of the Gentiles. Under the stars I cried upon the Lord—and He answered me.

ELAD [*sternly*]. Yea, you called upon Him even as the heathen called upon their gods that night, offering strange flesh upon their altars in the hills.

JEPHTHAH. I was mad—mad with my pain and weariness—and fear. I, even I, Jephthah, knew fear at that moment. Not for myself, for my sword was ready, and though curs worry a dead lion, he feels not their fangs. But I feared for Sheilah, my little dove, whom my death would leave alone in

the forest, prey to every snare of the fowler, daughter of an outcast in Israel.

ELAD [*softening a little*]. So it was for little Sheilah you wrought this sin before the Lord?

JEPHTHAH. He will not account it for sin, as in my madness I knew not what I vowed.

ELAD. But I was not mad—nor was Nathan, son of Amasa, and we heard without mistaking the words you spoke before the Lord. [*Sternly.*] Has your madness left you that you in the light of day can recall the wild vow you pledged there in the darkness?

JEPHTHAH [*striving to speak calmly*]. Surely, I recall the vow I made unto the Lord before He sent strength back into my arms and hope into my soul. [*Repeats with a sort of awed hesitancy.*] I vowed unto the Lord and said, "If Thou wilt indeed deliver the children of Ammon into my hand, whatsoever cometh out of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, it shall be the Lord's and I will offer it up for a burnt offering."

ELAD. So did you vow—a rash vow and unholy from the mouth of a son of Israel.

JEPHTHAH. Can one come forth from a tomb? My house is as empty as a conquered city. Sheilah and Dinah, her nurse, have gone to join the women in Mizpeh who will dance before me with timbrels and with rejoicing. [NATHAN, *who has previously passed, now re-enters, flowers twined about his sword and helmet.*] Ah, my good Nathan, have you seen your brethren?

NATHAN. Yea, my lord Jephthah, and it is well with them, even my aged father, Amasa. He comes with the other elders of Mizpeh to welcome you who have saved them out of the hand of Ammon. Growing impatient, they will seek you here.

JEPHTHAH [*nodding approval*]. They come to do me honor. And my little Sheilah? Did she not shine bravely forth among the maids of Mizpeh?

NATHAN [*anxiously*]. Nay, my lord. She was not with

the others. But my sister Rachel said she remained at home to deck herself.

JEPHTHAH [*in sudden fear*]. Is she within? [*Unconsciously he turns to his own door, crying out.*] Sheilah!

SHEILAH [*within*]. Nay, Dinah, the circlet *is* fastened. Hasten—my father calls! [SHEILAH *comes bounding from the house, dressed in robes of white and rich purples and blues, a jeweled circlet and silvered veil about her head, timbrels in her hands.*]

SHEILAH. I am the first to greet you. Welcome home.

NATHAN [*crying out in terror*]. Back! Back!

JEPHTHAH [*trying to push her hands away as she seeks to embrace him*]. Return unto the house—return. [*Frantically.*] Why did you come forth?

SHEILAH [*amazed*]. To bid you welcome. [*Again trying to throw her arms about him as he turns away.*] Father, look at me.

JEPHTHAH [*hoarsely*]. What have I done that God should hate me so?

SHEILAH [*in hurt amazement*]. Father! [*She goes shyly to* ELAD *and bends to kiss his hand. He raises her and embraces her, his stern face quivering with emotion. She goes back to her father, timidly taking his hand.*] Perhaps you are wroth to see me robed in these? Dinah permitted me to deck myself thus, for she thought that it would please you to see me in my mother's festal garments. [*Shyly, her eyes falling before* NATHAN'S *admiring glance.*] She said that they became me. [*Falling before her father, she spreads out her glittering robes.*] Father, will you not look at me?

NATHAN [*raising her and trying to draw her away*]. Fret not your father.

SHEILAH. But I have not seen him these many months and now—

NATHAN. He is spent and worn after his wounds and many battles.

SHEILAH [*now all tender concern*]. Father—you, perchance are faint from your long march beneath the burning sun? [*He*

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER
The Return of Jephthah

nods, unable to speak.] Then, come, and I will take your helmet and your spear. [*Smilingly she disarms him.*] See, Nathan, again I act as armorbearer to a captain in Israel. Give me your cloak, O my father. [*Her hands are filled; she pauses a moment to lean her head upon his shoulder.*] I will bring a cooling drink for you, and you must rest before we go down into Mizpeh together.

JEPHTHAH [*to* NATHAN]. Take her away. I cannot bear to look upon her face.

NATHAN [*to* SHEILAH, *relieving her of her burden as he leads her into the house*]. Come—I will bear these things within for you. And Dinah, your nurse, will help us to prepare a drink to refresh your father. [*The two go into the house, talking together,* SHEILAH *casting a glance at her father, half entreaty, half fear.*]

JEPHTHAH [*after a long silence, avoiding* ELAD'S *eyes*]. The Lord cannot demand payment now. I knew not what I vowed.

ELAD [*quietly*]. The vow that God has heard must be fulfilled.

JEPHTHAH [*pleading*]. You must be silent. My victories have left me as a king; my wealth, my power—what are they worth without her, my only child, seeing that beside her I have neither sons nor daughters. And I will not play the miser with you—if you forget my vow, as I must do.

ELAD. I am a man of honor, an elder in Israel: yet you dare stain my ears with bribes!

JEPHTHAH [*with sudden craft*]. Bribes? Am I not your son—even before the people—and are not my possessions and my praises yours? Now wealth will I give to keep your age from want and in Mizpeh's gates shall my voice praise your name, bidding all men show you reverence.

ELAD [*with quiet scorn*]. What are the promises of one foresworn? First pay the debt you owe unto the Lord our God.

JEPHTHAH [*broken, his spirit all gone from him*]. Hear me for pity, then, since neither gold nor honor buy your silence.

My child is all to me. Just now she stood there so like her own mother on her bridal day, I dreamed I saw her mother in her face . . . a stately maiden as beautiful as the sunrise . . . [*Abruptly.*] Is it nothing to you that my only child must die?

ELAD [*with a sudden flare of anger*]. It is much to me that the last of our blood must perish for your folly, that our line must end should Sheilah's eyes close in death ere she leaves a child to call her "mother."

JEPHTHAH. Then mercy—since your bereaved heart will bleed with mine above her grave. What joy will remain for either of us, if she be gone?

ELAD [*himself again*]. Our joys and griefs are ripples on a stream. The vow that God has heard must be fulfilled.

JEPHTHAH [*eagerly*]. Perchance a vow made before the altar of the Lord and in the open day. But no man heard my vow save young Nathan, son of Amasa; and he loves her as his own soul. He will not chide me for my broken vow.

ELAD. But I heard—and I have not forgotten nor will I forget the vow you made before the Lord.

JEPHTHAH. Father!

ELAD [*unheeding*]. I know with what rash promise you sought to bribe the Lord God and if your memory stumble I will seek ever to keep your vow before your eyes. If you dare tempt the anger of the Lord by mocking Him, His righteous anger will not flame for you alone, but will consume all our land by reason of your sin. He inclined His ear to your voice; He gave to you the desire of your heart. Surely, He heard your vow and it must be fulfilled.

JEPHTHAH. Though you are merciless to me—be kind to her. She is so young; the flower of her life is opening to the sun and a golden path stretches before her. She must not die.

ELAD. Death is a little thing, but honor great. The vow that God has heard must be fulfilled.

JEPHTHAH [*heavily, without anger*]. I think you must be as merciless as God. [SHEILAH *comes from the house bearing a goblet. She is followed by* NATHAN *and* DINAH. *The for-*

mer looks greatly troubled in spite of his efforts to remain calm.]

DINAH [*with an obeisance to the two men*]. Welcome, O my master. I have cared for the maid during your absence like a tender flower. [*Fondly.*] Is she not like a rose in her festal dress?

JEPHTHAH [*holding* SHEILAH *at arm's length and speaking with a terrible longing*]. A rose that whispers summer to my heart!

SHEILAH [*looking up at him brightly*]. Ah, now you are my good father again! Come, taste of the drink I have just prepared for you.

JEPHTHAH [*taking cup*]. A bitter drink, you give to me, my child.

NATHAN [*hurriedly to* JEPHTHAH *as* DINAH *draws* SHEILAH *away fussily rearranging her veil*]. See, the people of Mizpeh wait no longer. They will do you honor even before your house.

JEPHTHAH [*seizing his hand*]. My vow!

NATHAN. It must be as though it had never been spoken. Only raise your head and look boldly upon the people, lest they think you a man afflicted by the hand of God. [*The people of Mizpeh enter in festal procession, the elders, led by* AMASA, *at their head. The soldiers are in armor, their helmets and spears festooned with flowers. The women and children carry flowers.* ZEBUL, *the singer, stands with his harp among the maidens, who carry timbrels which they clash as they move.*]

AMASA [*as the great shouting dies away*]. No longer would we bide by the city's gate to bid you welcome, O Jephthah. Great wonders have you wrought for us in the battlefield and all that is ours, our lands, our homes, our hearts, are yours, seeing that your hand has delivered us from the children of Ammon.

JEPHTHAH [*lifelessly*]. Not I, but the Lord brought low our enemy. I conquered only in His name.

ELAD [*warningly*]. And if a man deny him—

ZEBUL [*slight and boyish, clad in white and gold*]. Women of Mizpeh, cast flowers before the feet of him who delivered us from Ammon. Maidens, sound your timbrels and cry aloud his name before all the people. [*The women and children shower* JEPHTHAH *with flowers as he stands on the doorsteps his hand upon* NATHAN'S *shoulder, his face hard and white. Then, at a signal from* ZEBUL, *the maidens whirl into a festal dance, clashing their timbrels as they move. The dance is wild and barbaric in its fierce joy: through it all flashes the figure of* JEPHTHAH'S *daughter, who at the last, casts her timbrel aside and dances with her father's sword held in triumph above her head.*]

PEOPLE OF MIZPEH [*as dance ends and maidens prostrate themselves before* JEPHTHAH]. Hail—Jephthah—hail!

A WOMAN [*bringing two little children to* JEPHTHAH]. Deliverer of Israel, may not my children kiss your garments' hem that in years to come they may boast of it, in speaking of this day of days?

JEPHTHAH [*drawing back as though in terror*]. No—no.

AN OLD MAN [*richly dressed and followed by his slaves*]. O my lord Jephthah, make glad the heart of your servant by accepting a few poor trinkets out of his hand. [*He presses upon* JEPHTHAH *two golden caskets he takes from his slaves.*] Accept these, my lord, and honor the giver in your acceptance. [*From one of the caskets, which* JEPHTHAH *with a gesture almost of horror has handed to* NATHAN, *he draws forth a glittering diadem.*] I know this too mean a trifle to encircle the brow of him who saved us from Ammon. [*With the mock humility of the Orient.*] Though it has long been cherished in our house, for 'tis said my ancestor brought it out of Egypt and even Pharaoh might have worn it without shame. [*With another bow.*] And deign to take these poor vials filled with rare oils and strange ointments, unworthy your notice, though they might anoint a king on his crowning day.

JEPHTHAH [*protesting*]. No—no—not for me such gifts and such homage.

NATHAN. Be strong, my lord, and of good courage. [*Seeking to divert the people who have begun to look upon* JEPHTHAH *curiously, talking among themselves.*] Sing, Zebul, sing a festal song for our rejoicing.

VOICES. Take your harp, O singer of God, and play upon it. [ZEBUL *rises upon the rocks and plays a prelude upon his harp before he begins his song. Whenever he pauses, the people continue, improvising in their joy.*]

ZEBUL. I will sing unto the Lord,
I will sing praise to the Lord, the God of Israel.

WOMEN. We will sing of the victories of Israel.

WARRIORS. We will sing of the triumph of Jephthah before the Lord.

WOMEN. Lo, Ammon was upon us;
Ammon laid waste our cities,
And our virgins he carried into captivity.

WARRIORS. We took up the sword against Ammon;
But Ammon stood as a rock,
And our hearts were troubled within us.

ZEBUL. Then arose Jephthah like a star in the darkness,
Even as a star that brings deliverance in the night season;
He unsheathed the sword and Ammon trembled before him;
He went forth into battle and the horsemen of Ammon fled before his coming.

WARRIORS. The princes of Ammon fled, leaving their weapons behind them;

WOMEN. The women of Ammon wail upon the mountains for those who return not from battle.

ZEBUL. All this has Jephthah accomplished for the sake of Israel:
He raised his hand and he conquered,
He went forth to battle and his captains divided the spoil.

[ZEBUL *pauses for a moment, his fingers wandering dreamily over the strings.* ELAD *comes close to* JEPHTHAH, *his face stern and threatening.*]

ELAD. I will look no longer upon this mockery. Every honor, every praise uttered to your name will do more to kindle the anger of the God you have denied. Strip yourself of deceit and show yourself to the people for what you are—the breaker of your oath even to God.

JEPHTHAH [*indicating* SHEILAH *as she stands listening to* NATHAN]. I cannot.

ELAD. Speak you—or I will speak.

AMASA [*warningly*]. Hush—again the singer speaks for God.

ZEBUL [*his face rapt*]. I will sing unto the Lord,
I will sing praise unto the Lord, the God of Israel;
For with oil hath He filled my cup,
He hath filled my cup even to overflowing;
Therefore will I praise the Lord,
Therefore will I magnify His name forever and ever.

JEPHTHAH [*turning to* ELAD *and crying out passionately*]. Cease with your music and rejoicing! [ZEBUL *comes down from his place on the rocks. The people look at each other in amazed fear.*]

SHEILAH [*throwing herself before her father*]. Father—my father—what hidden grief tears at your heart? What bitter thing troubles you?

JEPHTHAH [*dully*]. Alas, my daughter, you have brought me low. You alone trouble me. For I have sworn and I dare not turn back.

NATHAN [*coming to him quickly*]. For her sake be silent.

ELAD. Speak, Jephthah—will you tell the people, or must I?

NATHAN. Peace—Elad—peace!

ELAD. Nay, he must speak, for who can hide from God? Speak, Jephthah—tell of your bargain with the Lord. Let the people judge betwixt you. [JEPHTHAH *tries to speak, hesitates, turns away. The people murmur among themselves.*]

TIRZAH. The hand of God has touched him; he would speak and yet is dumb.

NATHAN [*pleadingly*]. You will not tell them?

JEPHTHAH. I must speak; for if my tongue is silent he will accuse me. And I feel God is on his side, not mine. [*To the people.*] You praise me for my hard-won battles, the cities I have taken by my spear. Praise instead the Lord God of Israel who led me on and brought me at last unto victory.

AMASA. Surely, we praise Him without measure for saving us through your hand.

JEPHTHAH. If there be justice in Mizpeh, hear my words and judge fairly between me and this man, even my father. Learn how I bribed the Lord God to do battle for your sakes and brought victory out of His hand that Israel might not perish from the earth.

NATHAN. You are mad. I pray you do not speak.

JEPHTHAH. Nay, my son. Perhaps it is better that the men of Mizpeh decide this thing and bid me do what seems right in their eyes. Can I fear their decision, seeing that they are fathers with the love of their own children in their hearts? [*He turns again to the wondering people.*] Hear, then, how I bribed our God that He might lead us unto peace: I, even I, Jephthah, son of Elad, raised my hands to Him in the darkness and cried unto Him: "If Thou wilt indeed deliver the children of Ammon into my hand, whatsoever cometh out of my house to meet me when I return in peace, it shall be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering."

SHEILAH [*half understanding*]. My father!

JEPHTHAH [*appealing to* NATHAN]. Were these the words I spoke to God?

NATHAN [*passionately*]. He did not hear your words—He did not hear.

JEPHTHAH [*to the people*]. And as I approached the gates of Mizpeh to-day, my daughter came to meet me. These two know she was the first to come from out my house. [DINAH *holds* SHEILAH *in sudden terror. The people draw back.*] Men of Mizpeh, men of Mizpeh, tell me, must I keep such a vow made in the madness of battle when I knew not what I vowed?

AMASA [*doubtfully to* ELAD]. Throughout Mizpeh and

Gilead, men speak of your wisdom in the gates and come to you for judgment. Advise us out of your knowledge, O Elad, and tell us must he keep this vow.

ELAD. The vow that God has heard must be fulfilled. Else will His anger consume all Mizpeh and the people therein, because you forced not Jephthah to fulfill his vow.

JEPHTHAH. My friends—you are my friends, now that I have saved you from Ammon—friends, it was for your sake I vowed, and if I sinned I sinned for your sake, also. If I fail in payment and His anger be kindled against Mizpeh, will you not bear it willingly since it is I who saved you out of the hand of Ammon?

JOSIAH [*leaving his place among the warriors*]. I am a soldier—a poor, plain man, not wise in the ways of the Lord as you, O elders in Israel. [*He indicates* AMASA *and* ELAD.] But this I know—Jephthah has fought for the Lord of Battles as no man ever fought for Him before. Surely, with Jephthah's blood shed upon the battlefield the Lord will wash out all remembrances of the vow he made for Mizpeh.

ELAD. Not so—for God remembers and is just.

JOSIAH. Then if He does indeed demand a sacrifice, since it was for Mizpeh Jephthah sinned, let one of Mizpeh atone. Let me be slain upon the altar. I have lived my days and there are none to mourn for me; but this young maid is like a meadow flower. [*Murmurs half of relief, half of anger among the people.* JEPHTHAH *seizes* JOSIAH'S *hand.*]

ELAD. Though a dozen men and maidens be offered upon the altar, yet will His wrath not diminish against Mizpeh. Yet will you harbor in your midst a mocker of God, a breaker of vows. If thus you seek to cheat the God of Truth, from this day no vow is safe in Israel.

ZEBUL [*rousing himself from his reverie*]. If God require this child for a sacrifice, He will speak. But, surely, the maid is guiltless, and she must not die.

ELAD [*bitterly*]. Yet must all the guiltless in Mizpeh perish because we did not prevent Jephthah when he sought to break his vow?

NATHAN [*appealing to* AMASA]. My father, you are the first of the elders of Mizpeh. You have the ear of the people even as Elad. Speak to them—urge them that they forbid Jephthah lay hand upon his child.

AMASA [*heavily*]. My son—my son—and you sought her for your bride! [*He turns to the people waiting for his words, hesitates, goes to* JEPHTHAH *and takes his hand.*] I would that I might comfort you and yet only bitter words can fall from my tongue to-day. This youth—[*his hand on* NATHAN'S *shoulder*]—is very dear to me in the pride and splendor of his manhood. Yet had I vowed as you, and had the Lord God so smitten me for my presumption, him would I sacrifice to appease the righteous wrath of the Most High.

NATHAN [*protesting*]. My father!

AMASA. I know that your child is your life, for we live only in our children. But can a man live without honor? Will the sons of men give heed to the pledges of one who has broken a vow made without compulsion and without force? No power in Israel can force you to do the thing that you have sworn to do, a thing so fearful that I dare not call it by name. But be warned, O Jephthah, that if you fail to keep your vow, every voice in Israel will cry out against you as a son of shame, a thing without honor, a breaker of vows.

JEPHTHAH [*cowering*]. Cease—cease—

NATHAN [*turning on his father*]. I looked to you to plead for the maid for the sake of mercy, and you have shown no mercy. You prate of shame and honor and vows, and by your words would shed innocent blood. Tenderness do you feel for the honor of Jephthah, but you would send his daughter under the sacrificial knife.

AMASA [*shocked at his rebellion*]. My son—you speak to your father!

NATHAN. Nay, I speak to an elder in Israel, who bears the name of Justice on his lips, but serves her not in his heart. And in seeking to do that which is pleasing to the Lord God, you men of wisdom and elders before the people have gone groping in the darkness. Cruelty has blinded your eyes and

you stumble as you go. Cease then to prate of Justice, but learn to know her ways. For I, too, will call upon Justice to spare the daughter of Jephthah in her innocence. [*Murmurs among the people.* JEPHTHAH *raises his haggard face, almost daring to hope.*]

NATHAN [*pointing to* SHEILAH, *who stands near her father*]. This maiden is my betrothed wife. Do not the elders in Israel know that her father has no power over her, that she was not his to dedicate to the Lord when he made his vow? [*The people give a great cry of relief.* JEPHTHAH *breaks down utterly and gropes to reach* SHEILAH, *but she has already hurried to* NATHAN, *who clasps her in his arms.*]

NATHAN [*as he draws her from the rest*]. Beloved, will you take life from my hands at such a price? Will you wed me though I dared to speak of you as mine without a word from you to comfort me during these months of doubt and waiting?

SHEILAH [*shyly, not daring to look at him*]. If you had not loved me, I should have been glad to die, for only in your love are joy and life for me.

DINAH. Praise to the God of Israel Who would not suffer the innocent to perish! [*She crosses to* SHEILAH *and embraces her tenderly, before leading her to her father.*]

JEPHTHAH [*brokenly, as he blesses her*]. My daughter, my little white dove, will you forgive me?

SHEILAH. You knew not what you vowed. [*She goes a little timidly to* ELAD *who stands wrathfully apart.*] And have you no betrothal blessing for me, O my grandfather?

ELAD [*in a voice of cold anger*]. How can I bless that which the Lord has already cursed? [SHEILAH *shrinks back, the people growing vaguely disturbed under the implied menace in his words.*]

AMASA. Hard words to welcome a bride in Israel!

ELAD. Better she had never seen the light than to establish a home, the pillars of which are treachery and the foundations deceit.

JEPHTHAH. O my father, would you shame your own blood before the eyes of all Mizpeh?

ELAD. You do well, my son, to remind me that she is of my blood. Is she not doubly dear to me, seeing my other sons and their children are all dead, and that through her and her children I hoped to see my name live on in Israel? But, dearer to me than my own blood is righteousness and fair dealing. Though every man in Mizpeh turn his hand to trickery and applaud falsehood, still will I cry out against you. Though you seem to prosper in your evil, yet in the end will you think upon my warning, for you will know that it is without profit to cheat God.

NATHAN. Must I tell an elder in Israel that the husband and not the father of a betrothed maiden is her master? That if she is betrothed she is already as his wife and no man can take her from him.

ELAD [*bitingly*]. If she be betrothed!

NATHAN. Her father consented to my suit a month of days ere he vowed her away.

ELAD. Is this a betrothal in Israel? Where were the witnesses, where the betrothal ring, the dowry bestowed upon the virgin, and the writing which bound her to you as your wife? [*He turns upon* JEPHTHAH *savagely*]. I have fought a good fight for your honor and I have failed. Save your child by a trick and deceive the God beneath Whose wings she would dwell in Israel. But may death close my eyes ere they behold the payment He will demand of the tricksters of Mizpeh. [*He turns to go, but* NATHAN *stands in his path.*]

NATHAN. I have sought to keep silent for I am but a youth and how dare I speak wrathfully to an aged head so honored in Israel? But no man shall say I win my bride by fraud and double dealing. [*He turns desperately to the people, drawing* SHEILAH *before them.*] I will not take her for my wedded wife until every voice in Mizpeh proclaim our nuptial blessing, until every tongue declare that he speaks not for the God whose honor he would defend, but out of the doubtful imagination of

his own heart. [*He turns to* ZEBUL.] Zebul, you are the maker of music, the singer of God, and, being near His heart, you hear His voice. Speak, seer, and tell us, must the maiden die?

ZEBUL [*speaking slowly after a long pause*]. Even I, the singer of God, must falter in my speaking, for how shall mortal man know the will of his Maker? But this I know—the smoke on grudging altars will not rise; the wreath unwilling fingers place upon the shrine will wither in an hour. We must give gladly, if we give to Him.

SHEILAH [*stepping out quickly*]. And I give gladly when I give myself.

NATHAN [*seeking to silence her*]. You are mad.

SHEILAH. He is mad who would dissuade me. I have listened while the elders spoke and now I know that my father's vow must be fulfilled and that my feet must follow the path his words have made for me. [*She goes to him quietly.*] Father, since you have vowed unto the Lord, offering up my young life, even for the sake of Mizpeh, then do to me according to your vow.

NATHAN. No—Sheilah—

AMASA [*restraining him*]. Nay, let the maiden speak.

SHEILAH. I do not know why this thing has come to me. Yesterday my life stretched before my feet like a meadow cool with streams and bright with flowers. I thought that God's hand would lead me along the quiet household ways my mother knew and that I would serve Him best by rearing strong sons to fight for Israel.

NATHAN. God would not have it otherwise, although your father again and yet again vowed away your life.

SHEILAH [*with sudden spirit*]. Think you I lay this thing upon God and believe in my heart that He desires such a sacrifice? Nay, for He is the God of love and pities all His creatures. Think you if I have care to feed the shy brown birds and sorrow over the flower my foot has trampled in passing, that He, the Maker of the world, will be less loving to the creatures He has made? Surely, He Himself will grieve

for my death and pity me, cut off in the spring and promise of my years.

DINAH. Truly, He would take no delight in your death. Live and be happy and forget your father's vow.

SHEILAH. I might forget—but the men of Mizpeh would remember. If I live, then must his newfound honor die.

DINAH [*clinging to her*]. What is his honor worth against your life? You are as my child and I would not live to weep above your grave. [*Turning to the people who shrink back.*] O men of Mizpeh, loose him from his vow.

SHEILAH. You see they do not answer. From the day of his birth has my father borne a shame not of his own making. The son of the foreign woman, what has he known but scorn from Gilead? And now that with his own blood he has bought a clean name among you, shall I permit him to lose it for my sake?

NATHAN. And what of me? Let the elders speak of witnesses and the ring of betrothal! What are these things to us who love one another? Before I asked your father for your hand, did not your eyes tell me your love was mine? Did not the touch of your hand before I followed your father to the wars bind us together even before God? [*He draws a broad gold bracelet from his girdle and slips it upon her wrist.*] This did you give to me on parting and I shall not rest until it becomes indeed the ring of betrothal and as my wife you cross the threshold of my house.

SHEILAH [*smiling sadly*]. And what gifts could I bring my husband? Shame and the mockery of the men of Mizpeh because I am Jephthah's daughter and live through his dishonor. Death would be easier than life with such a memory crouching beside our hearth.

NATHAN [*brokenly*]. O Sheilah—Sheilah—

SHEILAH [*with a touch of tenderness already strangely impersonal*]. Nay, my Nathan, nay, old playmate—do not grieve that this great thing has come to me—to raise my father high before the people and make of my name a golden memory for all days. We little dreamed of this when in the springtime we

played together knee-deep among the meadow flowers. [*Her hands unconsciously caressing the flowers she picks from those tossed before* JEPHTHAH, *her eyes turned longingly toward the spring-flushed hills.*] I never thought that I should die in spring.

DINAH [*wailing*]. You must not die! [*The other women take up her lament with all the passionate grief of the Orient.*]

SHEILAH [*giving way at their voices*]. Hearken, ye mountains, to my lamentations, and you, O hills, to the tears of my eyes. Rocks, testify to the weeping of my soul and to the grief that is in me. I have not been granted the joy of marriage, nor was the wreath of my betrothal completed. I have not been decked with ornaments by the hand of the bridegroom, nor have I been scented with perfume and with myrrh. Alas, O Mother, it was in vain you gave me birth; the grave was destined to be my bridal chamber.

DINAH [*wailing*]. The oil I prepared for your anointing must be spilled. The moths will eat the white garments I wove for your bridal.

SHEILAH. The bridal wreath my nurse twined for me will wither. [*She tears from her hair the myrtle entwined in her diadem.*] I shall take no pride in my garments of purple and blue.

MAIDENS. We will lament over your passing—we will grieve because you have been cut off in the flower of your life.

SHEILAH. I have danced in the sunshine and sung in the early morning. [*Turning to maidens.*] Now must you rend your garments as I go alone into the darkness.

JEPHTHAH [*crying from his broken heart*]. My daughter—O my daughter.

SHEILAH [*her own grief forgotten for his sake*]. O my father, look upon my face. [*She raises his head from his arms, forcing him to look at her.*] Look at me, father. See—I am not afraid.

JEPHTHAH [*meeting her eyes at last*]. What will you have of me, my daughter, in this heavy hour?

SHEILAH. Grant me that I may go with my companions up to the mountains to sojourn there while I grieve for my lost youth. Let me abide there two months with these maidens and they will lament with me as for one already dead. Yea, even the trees should weep for me and the birds mourn in their singing, seeing that I who so loved them must depart alone out of the land of the living. And when the two months are over, then will I come down into Mizpeh and you shall do to me according to your vow. [JEPHTHAH *nods, unable to speak. He embraces her silently. She turns to the maidens.*] Come with me and as we go we will gather flowers and sing merry songs—the songs the companions of the bride sing, when all rejoicing they bring her to her husband's house.

DINAH [*as the girls gather about* SHEILAH]. Child—child—have you no word for me?

SHEILAH. Dear, cross old Dinah—you must never scold me again. Come, you will go with us to the city's gate. [*With her arm about* DINAH, *she goes to* JEPHTHAH, *who stands with his face hidden, leaning against the doorpost. She looks at him longingly, is about to embrace him, shakes her head. Silently approaches* ELAD *and kisses the hem of his cloak. His face working with emotion, he blesses her. With a grave obeisance to* AMASA *and the other elders, is about to follow the singing maidens off toward Mizpeh, when* NATHAN *catches her hand.*]

NATHAN. Sheilah—is this your farewell to me? [*For a moment she sways against* DINAH, *then withdraws her hand and smiles up at him, a grave, detached smile.*]

SHEILAH. In two months I shall return. [*The bridal music rises in happy chorus as she follows the maidens, supporting the weeping* DINAH. *For a moment there is silence among the people. Suddenly* ZEBUL, *with a passionate gesture, breaks the strings of his harp.*]

ZEBUL. O harp that sang of triumph, be forever dumb. [*He points to the bowed figure of* JEPHTHAH *before his house.*]

[*Slowly the festal procession wends its way toward Mizpeh, their grief-stricken faces in strange con-*

trast to the bridal chorus of the maidens, who repeat again and again: "She will come to the bridegroom with rejoicing, with singing and the sound of harps!" Alone, JEPHTHAH *tears the garlands of rejoicing from the doorposts of his house.*]

[CURTAIN.]

AUTHOR'S NOTES

To the Reader: According to later legends clustered about the tale of Jephthah's Daughter, she was named Sheilah, " the one who is demanded." These commentators also described Jephthah's mother as the woman of another tribe. This would account for the ill treatment Jephthah received at the hands of his brethren, as at that time a woman who married out of her own tribe was held in great contempt. Even to this day many Orientals esteem the betrothal as binding as the marriage. And, should the reader feel that Nathan seems out of place in the rude atmosphere of the Judges, let him remember the gentle courtesy of Boaz, who is of the same period.

To the Producer: The scenery may be as conventional as desired, the house of Jephthah being a small hut, almost primitive in design, the place before it wild and rugged, the gates and hills beyond Mizpeh showing faintly in the distance. On the other hand, the background may consist of curtains of a dark or neutral color with the house of Jephthah and its rude entrance indicated on the left. The director of the music should remember that the music of the Orient lacks what we are pleased to call " harmony " and should strive for the rhythmic chant characteristic of primitive music. If desired, the " songs " may be chanted or even spoken to the music of a harp or violin played off stage. The dances may be made elaborate or simple, according to the talent available, but in every case should suggest the color and the vigor of the East. The cast may be shortened to include only a handful of women and soldiers, or extended to include a large number of singers and dancers and younger children.

THE FORFEIT *

A Play in One Act

By

T. B. ROGERS

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INTRODUCTION

THE FORFEIT

The Forfeit, by T. B. Rogers, author of *The Hall of Laughter, Eyes to the Blind, The Saint-King,* and *The Heirloom,* is one of the most popular pieces in the repertory of Little Theatres in England. The reasons for its popularity are not far to seek. The theme is compactly and economically worked out; the interest aroused in the beginning in the chief characters is not satisfied till the curtain falls; and all episodes of the plot are closely and logically connected. When the junior readers of this play grow older, they will be likely to become familiar with the treatment in other plays of problems similar to that presented in *The Forfeit;* they may then realize, perhaps, if they have not done so earlier, that there are issues involved that preclude a conventional happy ending.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

It has been pointed out that a playwright may present a character to the audience by direct explanation; by the effect that the character is seen to have upon other persons; by the character's appearance, manner, dress, action, speech, and habit; and by the environment with which the character surrounds himself. Of what methods of character presentation does the author of *The Forfeit* avail himself?

What is the theme of this play?

Does the plot of this play develop naturally? Or are circumstances forced and coincidence called in?

Compare the stage directions in this play with those in the other plays in this volume. How do they differ?

What are the opposing forces in this play?

Does the ending please you?

Are your sympathies unchanged throughout the play?

Explain the last sentence of the Introduction.

How would producers of *The Forfeit* secure the appropriate "atmosphere" in the setting?

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

JOHN PEMBREY, *of Pembrey and Withington, jewellers' merchants.*
HOWARD SHELDON, *their deputy managing clerk.*
MARJORIE HYDE, *Sheldon's typist.*
MRS. MULLINS, *a charwoman.*
THRUPP, *an office boy.*

THE FORFEIT

SCENE: *The manager's office at Pembrey and Withington's at nine-thirty in the morning. On the left good-sized writing table in mahogany, with inlaid leather top and nests of drawers at the sides. On the right a roll-top desk, closed. At the back, right, a door opening on the outer office. The usual office appurtenances.*

Seated at the writing table is HOWARD SHELDON, *an attractive-looking young man of about five-and-twenty. His keen eyes, his rather sharp aquiline nose, and the eager lineament of his face and chin suggest both business capacity and ambition. His well-groomed person, and his light grey smartly cut suit might be described as a little more than becoming in even the assistant managing clerk of such an old-established and respected firm. He evidently enjoys life and desires to figure in it not unostentatiously. At the moment, however, though it can easily be seen that his condition is not normal, his face bears the marks of fatigue and worry, and his expression is anxious and harassed. His one hand supports his chin, and the other restlessly takes up and sets down again the morning's unopened letters, which are receiving not his smallest attention.*

MISS HYDE, *a good-looking girl of about his own age, whose brow and expression plainly reveal both intelligence and strength of character, sits on the other side of the table awaiting his instructions with notebook and pencil. Her bright, understanding eyes are fixed in sympathetic concern upon him.*

There is a silence after the rise of the curtain.

MISS HYDE. I'm sure there's something wrong. You look tired out—and worried. That's not like you. [SHELDON *does*

not respond, but continues to fidget with the letters.] It's not the first time lately either. . . . Do I bother you?

SHELDON [*without looking up*]. I *am* worried. It's nothing —a passing mood.

MISS HYDE. But everything's going on splendidly. Did you have to stop over last night?

SHELDON [*with momentary alertness*]. No. Why?

MISS HYDE. Why? Because you look so exhausted. There's no earthly need to worry about things here. Why, just think. The returns well up for the last year and a record quarter. And all with the chief partner in the Argentine, and the manager away seriously ill. [*She nods towards the closed desk and vacant chair.*] Some credit I should think to the deputy. Mr. Sheldon, if Mr. Deakin never returns, you'll get his position. You know that.

SHELDON [*responding a little to her efforts at good cheer*]. Deakin's done, poor chap. Only yesterday Mr. Pembrey hinted at superannuation. But we can't talk of dead men's shoes.

MISS HYDE. No—even if we think. All the same the appointment will be yours. Oh, Mr. Sheldon, you know it's only a matter of time and it will be a partnership.

SHELDON [*ironically*]. What? With John Pembrey's nephew about to leave Rugby. No. My dear girl, if I can manage to hold the job, I suppose I'll be sitting at old Deakin's desk yonder at sixty, as bent and shrivelled as he—and, with my expensive tastes, still a penurious bachelor.

MISS HYDE. A poor old bachelor. [*Suddenly recollecting.*] Ah, I know what's wrong. It was that Masonic dinner last night, and you were up "betimes."

SHELDON [*looking miserably into space, both hands supporting his chin*]. I didn't go.

MISS HYDE. Not! Why, you were quite excited about it.

SHELDON [*without moving, in a distressful monotone*]. Last night I went a long walk—all alone—for miles—out your way —Hampstead.

MISS HYDE. Whatever for? You never go lonely walks. Mr. Sheldon, there *must* be something on your mind. Of

course if I'm inquisitive you'll let me know. It was always agreed that you might become formal with me at any time. Friends always, was the arrangement, but deputy manager and typist without notice as required.

SHELDON [*with impatience*]. Oh, please!

MISS HYDE [*annoyed with herself*]. I'm sorry. I want never to take a liberty. You know that when you are in your most intimate moods I'm always a little uncomfortable. Haven't you made fun of my pencil being always ready to take down? I have some sense. I'm not a fool.

SHELDON. Dear girl—don't.

MISS HYDE [*after a pause*]. Oh, I'm so grateful for that. But *do* tell me what is on your mind. On and off for weeks you have had these moods, and I'm yearning to know if I can help you.

SHELDON. You help me as no one else can. It's nothing. . . . Oh, look at this pile of letters.

MISS HYDE. There. That's better. Shall I help you to open them? What about that big Argentine order you're expecting from Albright's. It's probably under your sleeve, and Mr. Pembrey will be here soon. You negotiated it, you know.

SHELDON [*pulling himself together a little*]. Good heavens, if I'd only a little capital. I'd set up for myself. What's the good of salesmanship for others at my petty commission? . . . Not enough to look at a girl square in the face with worship and admiration.

MISS HYDE. That's not worrying you.

SHELDON. How do you know?

MISS HYDE. Because— [*Looking down.*] I've seen you doing it. Anyway, you're not worrying about that, Mr. Sheldon.

SHELDON. Oh, don't rub it in by Mr. Sheldoning me.

MISS HYDE. Well, tell me what's wrong.

SHELDON [*absent-mindedly opening letters*]. It's nothing. Lately I get moods. I get over them.

MISS HYDE. And then they come again. And I say, it's not like you. . . . Is that the order?

SHELDON [*a new man for the moment as he reads the coveted document*]. Good luck! Pembrey will be delighted. Albright's credit's good, too. "For the attention of Mr. Sheldon." I'm glad they put that. Withington doesn't like these personal touches, but Pembrey will pat me on the back. [*Passing the order to her.*] Will you acknowledge—a little bit specially, you know. That'll figure out well for me. You remember those Fardon's Consolidated I told you I'd bought. They're down at par, and it's been a bit of a loss, but I shall just buy in more. They're bound to appreciate again—I've heard, soon.

MISS HYDE. Mr. Sheldon, it's not speculation, is it?

SHELDON. How do you mean?

MISS HYDE. That's bothering you?

SHELDON [*shrugging*]. A bit, perhaps.

MISS HYDE. My father was a Get-Rich-Quick. That's why I'm here.

SHELDON. I've been let down a bit lately. But it's not that. Hark! [*He pulls himself together and rapidly tears open envelopes.* MISS HYDE *makes a note on the back of the order. But it is* THRUPP, *the office boy, who enters. He hands a newspaper to* SHELDON.]

THRUPP. Here you are, sir.

SHELDON. You got it, then.

THRUPP. Had to go into Cheapside again, sir. They said at the little shop on the corner, only *orders* for the "Financial News."

SHELDON. All right, Thrupp; that's all. [*Opening the paper.*] Mr. Pembrey's not come yet, I suppose?

THRUPP [*going*]. Yes, sir. Been here ten minutes. When I went in with his papers he was getting all the things out of his safe, and looking round the room as if he'd lost something.

SHELDON [*dropping the paper down on the table*]. He didn't say what?

THRUPP. No, sir.

SHELDON. All right, Thrupp. [*Exit* THRUPP, *with a smile for* MISS HYDE. *When the door is shut,* SHELDON *rises from his*

chair on an impulse. He seems to change his mind, and sits down again.]

MISS HYDE. Oh, something's wrong. Why, you look—quite ill.

SHELDON. It's nothing, I tell you. [*Taking up the paper again.*] I didn't see yesterday's prices last night. I expect it's pretty rotten. [*His finger glides down the share columns. He abruptly tosses the paper aside.*]

MISS HYDE. More points down?

SHELDON. They'll recover. I shall buy in. . . . Oh, don't look so shocked. You women always seem to class finance with horse-racing and the devil.

MISS HYDE. I don't. I know nothing about it.

SHELDON [*obviously talking to relieve his mind*]. It's the basis of our commercial system. Then why look so worried over me?

MISS HYDE. You were saying the other day that we women think only in a personal way. Finance, whatever it is, seems to have made *you* different. It has brought uneasiness and restlessness into your life. We women, you see, love a man to have balance, because we need it. [*Smiling.*] Just as we shrink from the drunkard because he means the total absence of it.

SHELDON. I say, you're always wise, aren't you?

MISS HYDE. I am very serious. You used to talk to me so earnestly about all sorts of things. Now, you are always preoccupied, and ill at ease.

SHELDON [*with sudden passion*]. Oh, don't you see that, before, I just lived from day to day, and that now I am feverishly concerned with the *means* of life—and that the *end* of life is—you, Marjorie.

MISS HYDE. Don't. You make me feel I asked for that. We agreed that you must not encourage those impulses.

SHELDON [*his hands at his temples*]. Impulses! It's my one desire—and the desire's eating the life out of me—because I have no right to express it.

MISS HYDE. Oh, can't you see how dreadful it is for me to

hear you express it and to recall it in one breath, and for me to say nothing, when you know you have all my thought and care, everything, me, for the asking or not asking. But enough of that. Besides, that is not what ails you.

SHELDON. Dear girl, it's just that at bottom.

MISS HYDE. There's more. I know there's more.

SHELDON [*covering his eyes*]. What if there is if I can never tell you?

MISS HYDE. I would help you if I could—whatever it was.

SHELDON [*trying to pull himself together*]. Oh, look at this —the letters unopened and Pembrey here. . . . Why doesn't he come in?

MISS HYDE [*with resolution*]. Let me give you a hand, then, and not another word. [*She reaches over and takes some of the letters, and they engage busily in opening them.*] Here's another order from Nuttall's.

SHELDON [*mechanically*]. The Montreal line. That's another to my credit. And yet—I no longer care.

MISS HYDE [*humouring him*]. I do. I think I'm getting restless and ambitious myself. . . . Here's Mr. Pembrey. [*Enter* MR. JOHN PEMBREY. *He is well on in his sixties—a fresh-complexioned, white-haired old man. A certain open-air look, together with the gardenia in his button-hole, suggests that the business does not claim all his life, while his benevolent forehead and kindly expression also suggest that the absent partner and not he is the dominating mind in Pembrey and Withington. True the small, tight lips and his judicial manner of looking over his gold-rimmed spectacles at others, or into his own thoughts, might suggest a mind that is meticulously cautious, but it is certain the mind will be generous in its conclusions. Just now, however, the benign countenance is disturbed, evidently by something unusual, and it is clear that his briefly nodded good-morning lacks its accustomed warmth through preoccupation.*]

PEMBREY. Good morning. Are you through with the letters, Mr. Sheldon?

SHELDON [*rising*]. Not quite, sir. A satisfactory budget,

so far. The order from Albright has come. [*He takes it from* MISS HYDE, *and holds it towards* PEMBREY.]

PEMBREY. Good. Mr. Withington will like to know. Better cable him. [*Dismissing the matter with a gesture.*] Mr. Sheldon, a very awkward thing has happened.

SHELDON. Indeed, sir.

PEMBREY. You will remember that yesterday afternoon Mr. Knapp, of Knapp Brothers, left us those six specimen rings—

SHELDON. With the new settings—yes, sir.

PEMBREY. You will recollect that I saw Mr. Knapp and took the matter over myself.

SHELDON. The diamonds were very valuable, I think you said.

PEMBREY. Most. I should know. They always used to be my line—my specialty in the old days. I interviewed Mr. Knapp, as you know, not in the show-room but in my own office, and I set the rings out on the end table near the door.

SHELDON. Yes, sir. You will remember that you called me in just for a word with Mr. Knapp before he went, and that I saw him out.

PEMBREY. Exactly. I took up the rings while you were there—am I right?—and when you and he were gone, I put them in my own private drawer in the safe.

SHELDON. Yes, sir. I saw you placing the rings in their cases as we left.

PEMBREY. Well, there are six cases, but only five rings. One case is empty.

SHELDON. That's strange, sir. I suppose Mr. Knapp didn't retain one for any purpose?

PEMBREY [*a little testily*]. Surely I should not forget if he had. My memory is extraordinarily good for details. In fact, in a moment, if you will let me proceed, I can illustrate how good. Now, you probably saw that I had taken the rings from their cases and placed them in a line, so—[*illustrating this on* SHELDON'S *table*]—each just above its own case—I am always methodical. Besides, there were one or two

other loose rings and the Gaelic brooch and that carcanet, lying on the table, and a quantity of papers.

SHELDON. You doubtless put everything in the safe before you left, sir. Do you think it is among them?

PEMBREY. No; of course I have looked. The other things are all there intact. But listen. The fact is, Mr. Sheldon, looking back I can distinctly see in my mind that I had just taken up five of the rings and restored them to their cases when Mr. Knapp interrupted me to shake hands. Then you and he left, and after that I have no recollection of taking up the sixth ring, though I placed six cases in the safe.

SHELDON. Have you looked among the papers on the table, sir?

PEMBREY. The papers have been straightened up. I examined them all, of course, and the room too. The point is I forgot that sixth ring—I blame myself—and it was left out.

SHELDON. Don't you think, sir, we had better look about the room. It may have slipped onto the floor, or been knocked off by some one passing. There's very little room by the door, sir, as you know, and people coming in and out might easily—

PEMBREY. I have looked everywhere. The ring was left out, and it has gone. As you know, Mr. Sheldon, we missed lately that set of earrings. Probably also they were left out a night. This ring we must get back. It is worth £250. Now I want you to help me in the early steps of an investigation of the matter. First of all, I must keep my mind quite free from any suspicion, and note from the outset all we know.

SHELDON. Exactly, sir.

PEMBREY. The ring is not in the room, which is quite clear and ship-shape. Evidently the cleaner was here last night—I shall come to that later. Now, it is necessary in the first place to establish certain facts. What then was the position last night? It is here I want to consult you. I hope Miss Hyde, you will not resent what I am going to do.

MISS HYDE. Not at all, Mr. Pembrey.

PEMBREY. At what time did you leave last evening, Miss Hyde?

MISS HYDE. At six exactly. I was in rather a hurry to get away.

SHELDON [*to* MISS HYDE]. The clock, I remember, struck just before I heard the boy wish Miss Hyde good-night.

PEMBREY. And you, Mr. Sheldon?

SHELDON. About five past, sir. I too was a little anxious to get away. You'll remember, sir, I looked in at your office to see if there was anything else required. And then I hurried the other clerks off.

PEMBREY. You were all clear then at six-five. And I was here until six-thirty. Knapp's call caused me to miss my usual train, and I went for the six-forty-five. Let me see, you have a key to the premises, Mr. Sheldon. You did not return here after six-thirty?

SHELDON. No, sir.

PEMBREY. Quite so. To proceed. Which night does the cleaner come?

MISS HYDE. Last night was Mrs. Mullins' night, Mr. Pembrey.

SHELDON. That's right.

PEMBREY. Exactly. As I said, everything in the show-room and the office is ship-shape. Here comes the unpleasant part of the investigation.

SHELDON. Won't you sit down, sir?

PEMBREY. I'm too upset to sit down. This woman, Mrs. Mullins, now. Unfortunately I know nothing of her.

MISS HYDE. An excellent woman, Mr. Pembrey, thoroughly respectable. I went to see her when she was ill lately.

SHELDON. Mr. Withington got her the position, sir. She was one of the housemaids at Peterstow. She and her husband are the caretakers at the Insurance Office in the next block. Most reliable couple. That is why Mr. Withington trusts her with a key.

MISS HYDE. I'm sure Mrs. Mullins is quite incapable of—

PEMBREY. We shall see. I'm not prejudiced in any way. And I'm not the kind of man to take a case of this kind to

the police court—if the ring turns up. You know that. Find that ring we must.

SHELDON. Would you care for me to ask Mrs. Mullins to step up—quite in a casual way?

PEMBREY. No. You must see, Mr. Sheldon, that *I* must take this matter up myself, personally. I want you kindly to fall in with my plan. By the way, have either you or Miss Hyde been into my office this morning?

MISS HYDE. No, Mr. Pembrey.

SHELDON. I came straight in here, as usual, sir.

PEMBREY. Good. Then do you mind just remaining here and going on with the letters just as usual, as if nothing had happened. I want no suspicion to be aroused in the outside office. I think you will see it is best you should remain here. By discussing the matter with you I think I have shown you that you have my confidence. Please assist me by conforming to my plan. [*Going.*] I shall be back presently. [*He goes out.* SHELDON *remains standing, watching with panic-stricken eyes the door he has closed.*]

MISS HYDE. And supposing all the time the ring is somewhere in his office? Mr. Pembrey is a dear old man, but really you know, he is getting a bit—shaky.

SHELDON [*still standing like one petrified*]. He's not, over this matter.

MISS HYDE [*scrutinizing his face*]. Mr. Sheldon!

SHELDON [*mechanically, without turning, his face drawn in anguish*]. Yes.

MISS HYDE. What is the matter?

SHELDON [*dropping into his chair, and burying his face in his hands*]. Oh, don't ask me. Don't ask me, Marjorie.

MISS HYDE [*rising and going to him*]. Tell me. You must.

SHELDON [*warding her off and speaking in a quick, hard whisper*]. Marjorie, I am a thief. I am a thief.

MISS HYDE. Howard!

SHELDON. Hush! Something must be done quickly.

MISS HYDE. You! Howard!

SHELDON. God help me! What can I do?

MISS HYDE. Whatever made you? Whatever made you?

SHELDON. Can't you guess?

MISS HYDE. A sudden temptation?

SHELDON. Debt.

MISS HYDE. But it was on the spur of the moment?

SHELDON. Yes. . . . No, deliberately.

MISS HYDE. Oh, it can't be!

SHELDON. I came back here again last night. . . . I have the ring in my pocket. Marjorie, help me.

MISS HYDE. I will do anything. . . . You were swept away on the moment, I know.

SHELDON. Oh, to have been able to tell some one. Marjorie, I am like one stunned. I can't think. I see myself as some one else—some one walking down there in the street. I want to call myself back, but I am dumb. It was not I did this thing. I have no more feeling.

MISS HYDE. What is to be done?

SHELDON. I can't think.

MISS HYDE. There are two things you can do. Either confess to Mr. Pembrey—

SHELDON. Marjorie, I can't.

MISS HYDE. Are you quite sure, Howard?

SHELDON. It would be ruin. No, I can't. Don't you see I'm bad. All I'm man enough to want to do is to remove the dirty traces of this thing, and I'm paralyzed.

MISS HYDE. Then you must somehow return the ring.

SHELDON. How? It must be done quickly.

MISS HYDE. Aren't you exaggerating the difficulties? They will never search you. . . . Oh, Howard!

SHELDON. He might ask me to do that, as a matter of form. Can't you see he's very clever. I would throw it through the window, but it would be found. God help me!

MISS HYDE. You won't make a confession?

SHELDON [*writhing*]. No.

MISS HYDE. Very well. Then you must give the ring to me. Let me think. Yes, you must give it to me—now, at once.

SHELDON. And bring suspicion on you? . . . Oh, Mar jorie, I couldn't meet my commitments.

MISS HYDE. Never mind that now.

SHELDON. I must tell you—I must tell it all. I saw tha Pembrey replaced only five rings and left the sixth out. It wa partly hidden by Knapp's quotation. Then, when I looked i to say good-night to him last thing, the devil made me look t see if it was still there. It was—practically covered by paper he had moved. I thought he would probably overlook it, an I was tempted not to point it out. Then I was tempted t come back here again in the evening. I waited down in th street, in hiding, and saw Pembrey go for his train. And the I overcame the temptation and went away. But I came back It was about seven. I slipped my key in the lock quietly, an let myself in. I heard that Mrs. Mullins had come and wa cleaning this office. This door was partly opened, but I re membered she was rather deaf, and then there was the noise o the scouring. I crept through the outer office and into Pem brey's room. The ring was still there, under the papers. O Marjorie, even then I nearly conquered myself. But I took i Then I crept out. As I opened the front door the scourin stopped. I looked to see if she had seen me, but I couldn tell. I don't think she did. I'm not sure. Don't you see, sh may have seen me.

MISS HYDE. Oh, tell me all this afterwards. Give me th ring. I will go and place it somewhere—somewhere where M Pembrey might have overlooked it.

SHELDON. You can't. We were to stay here. He may be there.

MISS HYDE. Anyhow you must give it me. I will do it the first opportunity. This alarm is unnecessary. All wi pass over smoothly. You were swept off your feet. It woul be cruel for just this once. Give me the ring. [SHELDO *presses his hands to his temples in utter despair. With th self-possession her type can summon in a crisis,* MISS HYD *goes first to the door and listens, then returns to him an places her hand on his shoulder with gentle but firm purpose*

MISS HYDE. Come, Howard, quickly. It is safer with me. He will return soon, and then, when there is a chance, I will slip out. He may *ask* me to go. It's dreadful enough, but things are not so bad. Pull yourself together, and face it out. Put yourself in the other person's place, and you will see things clearer. Mr. Pembrey's a poor old man, and he's probably gone to his own office to think over his plans. Then he'll return here and consult you—and I shall make my opportunity. I will place the ring somewhere in the outer office—where it might have rolled. Come, Howard, trust me.

SHELDON [*rising, and going toward the office door and back, one hand in his waistcoat pocket*]. But don't you see there's Mrs. Mullins? She may have seen me. I told Pembrey I didn't return here. How can I refute her word?

MISS HYDE [*holding out her hand*]. The ring first.

SHELDON [*taking it from his pocket, like one hypnotized by her*]. Oh, why do you do this for me?

MISS HYDE. I suppose I care enough for you. It was for you to decide the course, and you've decided. I'm going to help you through.

SHELDON [*placing the ring on the table and turning away*]. That I should ever have asked this of you, Marjorie!

MISS HYDE [*snatching up the ring, and slipping it in the pocket of her skirt*]. Oh, don't give way. . . . Now, about Mrs. Mullins?

SHELDON. I must have an alibi against her word.

MISS HYDE. Is it necessary? Yes, she may have heard you. Oh, *she* is involved.

SHELDON. An alibi I can prove.

MISS HYDE. But when the ring is found no suspicion will be cast on her.

SHELDON. And the impression that she saw me might easily have been an imaginary one. But I must have an alibi that I can *prove*, and how can I get that?

MISS HYDE. Some one else's word, you mean?

SHELDON. Yes, independent evidence, and I've no means of getting it.

MISS HYDE. Is there no way?

SHELDON [*turning to her, and looking at her tensely*]. Yes

MISS HYDE. Tell me.

SHELDON. Oh, I am a cad.

MISS HYDE. Can I help?

SHELDON. Yes. Oh, I can see a way as clear as casting a ledger. It's a dirty way. I'm ruthless, Marjorie. I want to escape.

MISS HYDE. I will do it. Quickly, what is it?

SHELDON. Would you lie for me?

MISS HYDE [*after a pause*]. Do you ask me?

SHELDON. It is the only thing.

MISS HYDE. Yes, I will lie. What is a lie if I can save you?

SHELDON. You must be prepared to say you saw me—anywhere—at seven o'clock last night.

MISS HYDE. Where, then?

SHELDON. Somewhere at a distance—and not too casually. Oh, the Devil's given me an idea.

MISS HYDE. What?

SHELDON [*looking away from her*]. Can we say we were together? [*She does not answer.*] Will you say that?

MISS HYDE. Yes—on conditions.

SHELDON. Oh, save me, Marjorie. What conditions?

MISS HYDE. That you will never hold yourself under any obligation to me for it.

SHELDON. I could never discharge it. Yes, I understand. No, never.

MISS HYDE. Quickly then—where? You went to Hampstead last night. I live there. Let us stick at nothing. You escorted me to my home.

SHELDON. That would clinch it. But our doings must agree. You realize that, Marjorie. We may be examined separately.

MISS HYDE. We never shall. Your imagination is tormenting you—oh, and me too. I took the tube as usual from Moorgate Street. You were with me.

SHELDON [*getting up and pacing up and down the office*]. You waited for me at Moorgate Street station.

MISS HYDE. Sit in your chair. Mr. Pembrey may come any minute. And the letters! [*She sits and he obeys her mechanically.*]

SHELDON. Did anything happen anywhere—anything outstanding?

MISS HYDE. There was a crowd—some bother—at Golder's Green.

SHELDON. That will do. . . . I'm dragging you to Hell.

MISS HYDE. Is that all, then?

SHELDON. If you can carry it through. Marjorie, get me through this, and I'll never fail again—never.

MISS HYDE. Now let us go on quietly with the letters. Give me a few. [*They open the letters.*] Your hand trembles worse than mine. Do pull yourself together. Think. Is everything covered?

SHELDON. Yes. . . . No, there's one thing. When you go out after he has come back, you must only hide the ring. You mustn't find it yourself. Ah, but it might be a long time, and I can't stand the suspense. And it might be found by some one else and kept.

MISS HYDE. I will tell Thrupp a ring is lost and ask him to look for it with me. Then I will give up the search. He will find it quite soon, and he is a very honest lad.

SHELDON. Oh, Marjorie! And I am branded for ever in your eyes!

MISS HYDE. You have slipped once, and I am helping you back.

SHELDON. But don't you see we can't tell Thrupp there's a ring lost.

MISS HYDE. Can't we? Oh, how busy the Devil is. Then I will find another way. I will go about looking for something. Thrupp will come and ask what. I will say never mind, and after a time tell him there's a ring lost. That will show there's been a real search. No, that won't do. But I will find some means. I will perhaps upset Thrupp's papers in such

a way as to lead him to find it. Leave it with me—but do trust me.

SHELDON [*flinging out his arms over the table in despair*]. I can't do it, Marjorie. I can't bring this on you. Oh, the shame is worse than confession.

MISS HYDE. Do you want to go back? [*She pauses.*] No, I knew you didn't. And I'm going through with you—if it's to Hell. You're not afraid, are you? Howard, it's all nothing. This alibi business won't ever happen. In half an hour all will be over.

SHELDON. Marjorie, if Pembrey sends for you to prove my statement, for mercy's sake let me know in some way—some sign—that you've managed your part.

MISS HYDE. Both my hands shall be behind me. [*She shows him how.*] Hark!

SHELDON. It's Pembrey. Thank God. I couldn't have stood the suspense longer.

MISS HYDE. Do you know I want to *pray* that all will go well—and one can't. We are alone in this, Howard—you and I. [*She places her hand on his.*] Do be brave.

SHELDON. He's talking to Thrupp. No, there is some one else. [*They listen.*]

MISS HYDE. Mrs. Mullins.

SHELDON. He has taken her to his office. [*There is silence. They watch the door. Presently it opens and* JOHN PEMBREY *enters slowly and gravely. He does not close the door behind him.*]

PEMBREY. Miss Hyde, may I ask you to step into the outer office, please.

MISS HYDE. Certainly. [*Taking up letters.*] Shall I go on with these, Mr. Sheldon? [SHELDON *nods, and she goes out. He arranges his papers. Self-possession comes to him now that she has gone.*]

PEMBREY. Mr. Sheldon, there's a very awkward complication in this affair. I'm afraid it's my duty to give you a little surprise. I have sent Miss Hyde out because I have to say

something *formally* which may hurt your dignity even though you may know I say it only formally.

SHELDON. Please proceed, sir. I quite realize there may be unpleasant formalities in such an examination as you are bound to make.

PEMBREY. It will be very unpleasant. You see, I am determined to secure this ring if it is within our reach. The fact is that Mrs. Mullins has made a serious statement, the veracity of which I am compelled in fairness to test.

SHELDON. What is that, sir?

PEMBREY. I intended at first to let Mrs. Mullins repeat it in your presence, but I consider it only due to you and your position, and the confidence we repose in you, to proceed as if you were one with us, the firm—as of course you are.

SHELDON. Thank you, sir.

PEMBREY. She said that while she was cleaning this room last evening, she heard some one in the outside office, and that on looking through the door she saw you just leaving the premises. This was at about seven o'clock.

SHELDON. I left at five minutes past six, sir.

PEMBREY. Quite so.

SHELDON. As I told you before, sir.

PEMBREY. Exactly. Then either Mrs. Mullins' statement is an invention, or she saw some one else leave. I should add that as yet I have told her nothing of the missing ring, and that therefore her statement was not made defensively except as dictated by her own fears. In putting what I am about to say please mark that it does not follow I have necessarily any doubt of your own word.

SHELDON. I quite understand, sir.

PEMBREY. Now, have you any outside evidence to prove where you really were at seven o'clock?

SHELDON. At seven? Yes, sir, I have. But—

PEMBREY. Is there a "but"? A "but" is rather unfortunate. But what?

SHELDON. It will involve a little explanation which I would

rather not have made, just yet at any rate—for the sake of the lady concerned. I mean Miss Hyde.

PEMBREY. Miss Hyde?

SHELDON. You see, sir, although my relation with Miss Hyde at this office is entirely a business one, privately it has become rather an intimate one. The fact is, last night I escorted Miss Hyde to Hampstead, where she lives.

PEMBREY. Good heavens, Mr. Sheldon, you gave me quite a shock. I thought you were going to say she was implicated—such an excellent young lady. I hardly expected a surprise of quite a pleasant kind. My dear sir, you have no need to be agitated about a confession of that sort, especially when it happens to clear your honour.

SHELDON. You see, sir, it's premature to speak of it. We are not engaged. She may not accept the offer I intend to make her.

PEMBREY. Oh, come, my lad. Don't trouble yourself. I'm old hand enough to understand how to deal with such a case. Why, everything is quite simple. All I have to do is to ask her in, and formally verify your statement. I can refrain from wishing you happiness till your hopes mature. She is a very estimable young lady, and at least I can wish you good luck.

SHELDON. Thank you, sir. Wouldn't it be best for you to see her alone?

PEMBREY. I think not. [*Smiling.*] I'm afraid you'll have to go through it, and she too. But the facts. [*Resuming his legal manner.*] You left here at five minutes past six. You joined her I suppose—at—where?

SHELDON. The tube station, sir, at Moorgate Street. We went to Golder's Green. We were there at about seven o'clock.

PEMBREY. At the very time when Mrs. Mullins said you were here. Very well. Now don't worry, Mr. Sheldon. There's nothing criminal in the attraction of the sexes. I think we shall be able to clear up this part of the investigation very neatly—if a little unpleasantly for another party.

SHELDON. Don't you think, sir, that Mrs. Mullins may have

made a mistake. These offices are very quiet at night. A woman might imagine all sorts of things.

PEMBREY. We can't indulge our sympathies in these cases at the cost of common sense. I'm going to ask Miss Hyde to come in. [*He opens the door and calls.*] Miss Hyde, please. [MISS HYDE *enters calmly. Her hands are placed behind her, and she gives one steady, meaning glance at* SHELDON. *Throughout the following interview* SHELDON *stands with face averted.* PEMBREY *either walks backwards and forwards with his hands beneath his coat-tails, looking profoundly over his glasses, or stands still, with his two thumbs and two forefingers placed together in front of him as if they make some mystic sign which it is necessary he should contemplate.*]

PEMBREY. Miss Hyde, do you mind my asking you, without any explanation, one or two questions that will materially help my investigation?

MISS HYDE. Certainly not, Mr. Pembrey, if I *can* help.

PEMBREY. Please be seated. [MISS HYDE *sits in chair near the door.*] Would you oblige by telling me exactly what happened to yourself after you left these premises at six o'clock last evening. No, please don't feel this a liberty I am taking.

MISS HYDE [*rising with simulated indignation*]. I hope, Mr. Pembrey, you don't think that I—

PEMBREY. Now, not at all. I will explain my object afterwards—in two minutes.

MISS HYDE. But really, Mr. Pembrey, is it not enough that I left at six?

PEMBREY. It is quite enough for me, but not for my immediate purpose. Please answer this question and the air will be cleared.

MISS HYDE. I hardly see what bearing this has, unless you suspect me.

PEMBREY. My dear Miss Hyde, I have no suspicion whatever of you.

MISS HYDE [*after a pause*]. I did what I do nearly every evening, Mr. Pembrey. I went to my train at Moorgate Street station.

PEMBREY. Thank you. May I ask, were you alone? [MISS HYDE, *continuing to play this probably impromptu part, for her acting seems too natural to have been deliberated, now looks toward* SHELDON *as if she must consult him before she reveals their secret. He feels her eyes upon him and turns to her, smiling a sickly smile.*]

MISS HYDE [*looking down—she has no need to simulate diffidence*]. If you must really know, Mr. Pembrey, Mr. Sheldon was with me.

PEMBREY. Ah! And he came to see you off? [*A smile beams over his face, intended to ease the tension created by his inquisition. But the question puzzles* MISS HYDE, *and she turns to* SHELDON *with a look of real enquiry. His face is stiff and unexpressive with the suspense. She decides to adhere to the preconcerted plan.*]

MISS HYDE. No. Mr. Sheldon came with me to Golder's Green. [*She sits down. Her flushed face appears to express shame at this admission.*]

PEMBREY. Thank you again. [*Cheerfully.*] And now forgive me for putting you through this ordeal. It was very courteous of Mr. Sheldon, and your statement entirely confirms his own account, for I have been obliged to subject him to a similar enquiry. Miss Hyde, I may now tell you that your answers have extricated Mr. Sheldon absolutely from a rather difficult position. May I hasten to add, Mr. Sheldon, that nothing whatever that has happened has at any stage shaken the entire confidence which I, or my absent partner too, have always had in you—and which in due course we shall, I am sure, express to you in a—tangible way.

SHELDON [*in an expressionless tone*]. I thank you very much, sir.

PEMBREY. And now we approach a very much more distasteful part of the business. For I must explain, Miss Hyde, that this Mrs. Mullins has made a statement to the effect that Mr. Sheldon did not leave this office until seven o'clock last evening, when she affirms she heard and saw him go out. Between you, you have shown that statement to be quite false.

It is a very serious development, and may have bearings on the issue. I must now ask Mrs. Mullins to come in here and repeat her statement again in your presence, and to offer what explanation she may. Before doing so, let me say this—that just as I have shown you I can be discomfortingly impartial to those I have every confidence in, so I intend to manifest no suspicion of Mrs. Mullins being implicated in the loss of the ring, nor indeed shall I entertain suspicion until there is sufficient evidence to warrant it.

SHELDON. I am perfectly assured, sir, of Mrs. Mullins' good character.

MISS HYDE. Oh, Mr. Pembrey, I know Mrs. Mullins is perfectly honest. There is some mistake. I am sure events will prove it.

PEMBREY [*going to the door*]. We shall see. [*He goes out, leaving the door ajar. The sound of another door being opened is heard.*]

SHELDON. Marjorie!

MISS HYDE. It is dreadful. But wait. [PEMBREY *returns almost immediately, and shows in* MRS. MULLINS, *a quiet, respectable-looking little woman, who is evidently very perplexed about the whole business.*]

PEMBREY. Come in here, Mrs. Mullins, please, and take a seat.

MRS. MULLINS. Thank you, sir. [*She sits nervously in* MISS HYDE'S *chair by* SHELDON'S *table.* PEMBREY *remains standing.*]

PEMBREY. Mrs. Mullins, something has occurred which makes it necessary for me to question you again in the presence of Mr. Sheldon and Miss Hyde to establish certain facts about the state of things here last night. You say that at about seven o'clock you heard and saw Mr. Sheldon leave these premises?

MRS. MULLINS. Yes, sir.

PEMBREY [*in a low, impressive voice*]. Are you quite sure in your own mind?

MRS. MULLINS [*her hand to her ear*]. I beg pardon, sir.

PEMBREY [*louder*]. I forgot you are deaf. I said: are you quite sure?

MRS. MULLINS. Yes, sir. Oh, I hope there's nothing—that shouldn't have been. I thought the place was empty. I didn't know you were here, Mr. Sheldon. I heard footsteps, and then, the door being opened, I looked out and saw you going through the door. It was you, Mr. Sheldon? [SHELDON *is hesitatingly about to speak, but* PEMBREY *interrupts.*]

PEMBREY. I want this conversation to be between you and me, Mrs. Mullins, please.

MRS. MULLINS. Oh, I hope there's nothing gone wrong, sir.

PEMBREY. Let me now tell you, Mrs. Mullins, that I have indubitable evidence, on the avowal of a third party, that Mr. Sheldon at seven o'clock was some miles away from here. I should add that your statement that he was here is of very great importance, since a very valuable diamond ring is missing which was left in my office yesterday evening, and that I was the last person to leave the premises before you arrived.

MRS. MULLINS. A ring, sir? Oh, dear, I hope I haven't cast any reflection on Mr. Sheldon by saying he was here.

PEMBREY. That is just what you did do. But that suspicion is removed. He was *not* here, Mrs. Mullins.

MRS. MULLINS. But—

PEMBREY. There are possible explanations of your statement. Either that another person you took for Mr. Sheldon was here and left at seven o'clock, of which there is no evidence; or that you imagined some one was here when there was no one; or that—

MRS. MULLINS [*with agitation*]. But there's some mistake. It was you, Mr. Sheldon?

SHELDON. I think it is perfectly clear, sir, that Mrs. Mullins really thinks and believes she saw me.

MRS. MULLINS. Of course I did, sir.

PEMBREY. Please leave this to Mrs. Mullins and me, Mr. Sheldon.

MISS HYDE. But, Mr. Pembrey, she's so certain in her mind. I'm sure it can't be that she is—

MRS. MULLINS [*her hands at her breast in alarm*]. You don't think it's me that has taken the ring, sir?

PEMBREY. I have no right to say such a thing, Mrs. Mullins. A robbery may have been effected—through the window. This ring is missing. The loss is very serious. The matter must be gone into. I am not one to *jump* at conclusions, and I am making no charges at all against you. Please mark that.

MRS. MULLINS. But it seemed just this minute that you thought I had taken the ring, sir.

MISS HYDE. Oh, Mr. Pembrey, I *know* Mrs. Mullins.

PEMBREY [*admonishing* MISS HYDE *gently with a gesture*]. You have said, ma'am, that you saw Mr. Sheldon here last night, and I have positive proof that he was at Hampstead at the time. Don't you see that this statement you volunteer might have a serious bearing on your own relation to this matter?

MRS. MULLINS [*utterly bewildered*]. I don't understand it. I am sure it was last night, sir.

PEMBREY. Ah! Now do please be quite sure. Don't suggest after all that it was some other night.

MRS. MULLINS. I don't, sir. Oh, I'm sure I don't know what to do. [*Her trembling hands find the table to support herself.*]

MISS HYDE [*greatly agitated*]. Mr. Pembrey, this is cruel. It's clear she is mistaken. Besides, the ring may turn up—

PEMBREY. I'm sure I've no desire to be cruel, Miss Hyde. As for the ring turning up, when, please, Mrs. Mullins, did you clean my office?

MRS. MULLINS. Last thing, sir. At about eight o'clock.

PEMBREY. And you saw no ring?

MRS. MULLINS. No, sir. Where would it be, sir?

PEMBREY. It was left on my side table.

MRS. MULLINS [*rocking to and fro*]. Oh, if only I knew you didn't think I took it, sir!

MISS HYDE [*with agitation*]. Mr. Pembrey hasn't said so. And I'm sure you didn't.

PEMBREY. I have no right whatever to say you are implicated. Now, Mrs. Mullins, I want you to think this matter over in your mind. I want you to go back to your home, and get your mind quite clear about things. Then if you come to me again this afternoon, you will find that, so far from desiring to be cruel, I desire to be nothing but kind.

MRS. MULLINS. I always thought you were very kind, sir. And Mr. Withington is very good to me, too. [*There is a knock at the door.*]

PEMBREY. Who is that? [*To* SHELDON.] Surely they can see we have important business here. [*Another knock.* MISS HYDE *starts towards the door.*] Come in! [*Enter* THRUPP.]

THRUPP. If you please, sir, something important. I don't know what's occupying you, sir, but in case it has anything to do with anything that's missing, I've just found a ring—this, sir, on the office floor. I'm afraid it's a bit damaged, sir. [*He hands it to* PEMBREY.]

PEMBREY [*recognizing the ring at a glance*]. Where did you find it?

THRUPP. Just inside the office, sir, in the floor hinge of the swing door, opposite your room, sir. I'm sorry, Mr. Sheldon; you always told me not to be so strong opening that door and I've crushed the ring. I heard it scrunch, or I shouldn't have seen it.

PEMBREY. That will do for the present. We can go into that some other time. Thank you, my boy.

THRUPP [*going*]. It was quite an accident, sir. The ring's the same colour as the brass hinge plate, and I couldn't see it.

PEMBREY. Another time. [*Exit* THRUPP. *A pause.*]

PEMBREY. First of all I thank God. Mr. Sheldon, I know you have shared my anxiety, and you will understand the necessity for the measures I took. Miss Hyde, those measures were unavoidably a little distressing. It is far better that they should have been taken for no purpose, than that the purpose we disliked should still have to be pursued. I am immensely relieved. Mrs. Mullins, you are already upset, and I shall say

no more. You will see, nevertheless, how the evidence you volunteered involved this very unpleasant enquiry.

MRS. MULLINS [*her relaxation almost a collapse*]. Oh, sir, the ring is found—and I had such thoughts.

PEMBREY. And *we* had such thoughts, too, Mrs. Mullins. Don't you see that? Now, I think it will be best for you to go back quietly home. As to your statement about Mr. Sheldon, I may say that I have never for a moment entertained any doubt as to *his* integrity.

MRS. MULLINS [*rising*]. I'm sorry, Mr. Sheldon, if anything I said made it seem anything else. [*Going.*] I can't help feeling upset, sir. It's so quiet in here at nights, and it doesn't seem the same place by day. [MISS HYDE *opens the door for her, and remains standing.*]

PEMBREY. Thank you, Mrs. Mullins. We must now commence business.

MRS. MULLINS. Good morning, sir. Good morning, miss. [*She goes.*]

PEMBREY [*after a pause*]. Well, thank God, I say again. And please forgive me. [SHELDON, *nervously handling his papers, makes as if to speak, but cannot.*] Of course, you see what has happened? [*Examining the ring.*] Fortunately there is no damage that cannot be repaired.

SHELDON. The ring must have been knocked off the table, sir.

PEMBREY. Exactly—and rolled. *I* might have done it. The woman might have done it herself when cleaning. It is rather unfortunate that the matter as far as she is concerned is not quite cleared up. But I doubt if we shall ever get further than this. Remember, I blame myself entirely for my oversight in leaving the ring out.

MISS HYDE. But surely it is evident that Mrs. Mullins is absolutely freed from any suspicion.

PEMBREY. Women, Miss Hyde, are so sympathetic. We must not be misguided by feeling. Those earrings disappeared, and there is this story of Mr. Sheldon. And Mrs. Mullins was very perturbed. One can only hope that if she

has ever been tempted, and if some sudden fear prompted her to make an unwarrantable statement—that what has taken place will have its effect.

MISS HYDE. Mr. Pembrey, nothing has occurred to justify our smallest doubts of Mrs. Mullins. She is absolutely trustworthy.

PEMBREY. True, we have no evidence to the contrary, Miss Hyde. [*Laughing.*] There is nothing half-hearted in a woman's championship, eh, Mr. Sheldon? And we have reason, I suppose, to thank God for that. . . . Well, well, ten-fifteen is late to start the day's work, and I know how pressed you must be, short-handed as we are. [*Going.*] When the letters are opened, please look in at my office with any important orders or enquiries. . . . [*Significantly, as he goes out.*] There is another little matter, too, concerning yourself Mr. Sheldon, which I think it will be agreeable for us both to go into.

SHELDON. Thank you, sir. [*The door closes on* SHELDON *and* MISS HYDE *standing, he at his table, she by the manager's desk. Motionless they remain thus, neither daring to look at the other. The tension of shame tightens, and at length* SHELDON *in utter collapse drops into his chair, burying his face in his hands.* MISS HYDE, *who is like one in a trance, drops exhausted into the chair near by, her face averted from* SHELDON. *There is silence.*]

SHELDON [*without looking up*]. Marjorie! . . . Marjorie! [*She cannot answer.*] I will never again—never. [*He looks up and she turns. When their eyes meet it is a dreadful moment for them. They seem to see one another's naked souls and are ashamed.*] Marjorie—you have saved me. Oh, save me still.

MISS HYDE [*rising slowly*]. Yes, I have saved you.

SHELDON. I can never forget it.

MISS HYDE [*painfully, and almost in a whisper*]. Nor can I forget it.

SHELDON. You *will* save me?

MISS HYDE [*with doom in her voice*]. You must save yourself, Howard.

SHELDON. Don't tell me I ask too much.

MISS HYDE. You have asked so much that I have no more to give.

SHELDON [*starting up, and speaking huskily and tensely*]. You will not desert me? You did not till now mean to desert me. Oh, Marjorie, I will repair things. I will make myself worthy of you. I ask—I beg. I need you.

MISS HYDE [*turning away from him*]. I would give you all, but *that* cannot be. Do you not see I can scarcely look you in the face. I would go to Hell for you—I have been. But no. If you mean marriage, think. Think of the shame that stands between us. Think of this woman and Mr. Pembrey's suspicion. [*Turning to him.*] Oh, Howard, had you confessed I would have risked all for you—waited for you—married you. [*With breaking voice.*] I could have looked at my wedding ring then, and thought without shame of that dreadful thing I handled here. [*She needs to support herself against the desk, but there is no wavering in her decision.*] No, Howard. I cannot.

SHELDON [*with an agonized cry*]. Marjorie!

An interval of silence, then a slow

[CURTAIN.]

THE TRYSTING PLACE*

A Farce in One Act

By

BOOTH TARKINGTON

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INTRODUCTION[1]

THE TRYSTING PLACE

The Trysting Place is by one of the most distinguished of our American men of letters. Booth Tarkington has probably received more honors than any other of our living authors. He has, for example, been the recipient twice of the Pulitzer Prize of $1,000.00 for the American novel of the preceding year "which best represents the wholesome atmosphere of American life and the highest standards of American manners and manhood." In 1919 he won this prize with *The Magnificent Ambersons,* and in 1922 with *Alice Adams.* The year after *The Magnificent Ambersons* received this substantial recognition, Mr. Tarkington was elected to membership in the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In the same year at a meeting of the Writers' Club "in a vote taken as to the six best novelists in the United States, the standard being literary achievement and not popularity, Mr. Tarkington was given fourth place." In 1921 a thousand readers of *The Outlook* selected at random were asked to name their ten favorite living authors. The greatest number of votes went to Rudyard Kipling, the second choice was Booth Tarkington. As further indicating Mr. Tarkington's position in American letters, it may be

[1] For biographical and other details, see the Robert Cortes Holliday items in the list of books For Supplementary Reading; the Introduction to *Beauty and the Jacobin,* in Cohen's *One-Act Plays by Modern Authors,* New York, 1921; and the Introduction to *The Intimate Strangers* in Cohen's *Longer Plays by Modern Authors,* New York, 1922.

noted that also in 1921 the *Publishers' Weekly* printed a list of "the most significant American authors" arranged according to the number of votes that each received from booksellers all over the United States. Mr Tarkington was first on this list, which contained forty names.

It is well to become acquainted with Booth Tarkington's works, his novels and his plays, early in one's reading career. Booth Tarkington writes of the younger generation and for them. He laughs at them and with them. He has done all these things in *The Trysting Place* in his characterization of Lancelot Briggs, who is a fitting companion piece to William Baxter in *Seventeen,* that novel of youth and summertime. "Since the Dickens triumph of two generations ago," one critic has remarked, "Tom Sawyer has been the only boy to gain a celebrity as general as that of Mr. Tarkington's two protégés of eleven and seventeen. . . . You are safe in alluding to Penrod or to the boy who was Seventeen in any company."

Whether you read Booth Tarkington's plays or novels you will be almost sure to find in their pages portraits of growing boys that even the originals of the pictures find food for mirth.

FOR SUPPLEMENTARY READING

Percy H. Boynton, *Booth Tarkington, The English Journal,* Vol. XII, February, 1923.

Robert Cortes Holliday, *A Gentleman from Indiana, The Literary Review,* New York, December 2, 1922.

Robert Cortes Holliday, *Booth Tarkington,* Garden City and New York, 1918.

The Literary Spotlight; II *Booth Tarkington* in *The Bookman,* Vol. 54, pp. 218-221.

Booth Tarkington, *Gentle Julia,* Garden City, New York, 1922.

Booth Tarkington, *The Gentleman from Indiana,* New York, 1907.

Booth Tarkington, *The Ghost Story,* Cincinnati, 1922.

Booth Tarkington, *Penrod,* Garden City, New York, 1914.

Booth Tarkington, *Penrod and Sam,* Garden City, New York, 1916.

Booth Tarkington, *Seventeen,* New York, 1916.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

What is the significance to the plot of the play of The Young Woman's (Mrs. Curtis's) fourth speech?

Why is Mrs. Briggs in such a hurry to have her daughter leave "the trysting place"?

Why does Mr. Tarkington call this play a *farce* and not a *comedy?*

How do you feel towards Lancelot at the close of the play? Do you think of him in the end as tragic or absurd?

Compare Lancelot Briggs with the hero of *Seventeen;* with the other boys of his age in Mr. Tarkington's other plays and novels.

Which is generally considered to be Booth Tarkington's more significant work, his novels or his plays?

Compare the design for *The Trysting Place* with that furnished for *Square Pegs.* Note the requirements of each play.

CHARACTERS

LANCELOT BRIGGS, *"a slim boy obviously under twenty."*

MRS. FANNIE BRIGGS, *his mother, "a handsome woman of forty-five or fifty."*

JESSIE BRIGGS, *his sister, "a pretty girl of about twenty."*

RUPERT SMITH, *her suitor.*

MRS. CURTIS, *"a young woman of twenty-five or perhaps she is even a little older."*

"THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE," *which turns out to belong to ———?*

HENRY INGOLDSBY, *"a man of fifty-five or possibly sixty."*

THE TRYSTING PLACE

The scene is a room just off the "lounge" of a hotel in the country. However, this is not a "country hotel"; but, on the contrary, one of those vast and elaborate houses of entertainment that affect an expensive simplicity in what is called the colonial manner, and ask to be visited—by those financially able to do so—in the general interest of health and the outdoor life. The wall at the back of the stage is broken only by symmetrically spaced pilasters of an ivory color; each of the side walls is broken in the same manner; but here the pilasters help to frame two rather broad entrances, one at the right and one at the left, and beyond these entrances, on both sides, we have glimpses of the two corridors that lead to them. There are a few old prints—or new prints from old plates—upon the walls; and there are flowering plants on stands in the corners. The furniture consists of some chintz-covered easy-chairs, a light wicker settee with a chintz cushion and a valance that reaches the floor; and there are two wicker tables with a vase of jonquils upon each of them. In the rear right-hand corner of the room, near the stand of plants, there is a tropical-looking chair, wicker, with a back of monstrous size—a Philippine Island chair—and in the opposite corner is its mate.

Dance music is heard from a distant orchestra. Just after the rise of the curtain two people come in together from the left—a young woman of twenty-five, or perhaps she is even a little older, and a slim boy obviously under twenty. She is rather elaborate in her afternoon indoor dress, but none the less effectively pretty; he is of a scrubbed and sleeked youthfulness, in white trousers, a short black coat and dancing shoes; and from the moment

of his first appearance he is seen to be in an extremity of love. He leans as near the young woman as he can; his eyes search her face yearningly and without intermission; he caroms into her slightly as they come in, and repeats the carom unwittingly. They have evidently just come from the dancing floor and are a little flushed; she fans herself with her handkerchief and he fans her with his. They are heard talking before they enter: "Oh, let's do find some place to sit down!" she is saying; and he, simultaneously: "Oh, wasn't that divine! You dance just simply divinely!"

These speeches "bring them on."

THE YOUNG WOMAN. Here's a place we can sit down! [*She immediately drops into a chair.*]

THE BOY. Yes, this is a lovely place, where nobody is at all. It's the only quiet place in the hotel: you never see more than two people here at a time, because it's kind of off, like this. That's why I wanted to walk this way. [*Sitting on a lounge and leaning toward her.*] Isn't it divine to be in a place where nobody is at *all?*

THE YOUNG WOMAN [*still fanning herself*]. Why, you and I are here.

THE BOY. Yes; but I mean nobody else at all. We're practically all alone, practically.

THE YOUNG WOMAN [*laughing as she waves her hand to indicate the spacious corridors to the right and left*]. Alone? Why, there are at least three hundred people in this hotel.

THE BOY. Yes, but they're all either outdoors, or dancin', or havin' tea, right now. It's practically the same as being alone. It is—practically, I mean.

THE YOUNG WOMAN. Yes, I've noticed that it was a rather secluded spot myself. [*She glances about the room thoughtfully, then turns to him, smiling.*] Don't you want to run and dance with some of those pretty young girls your own age?

THE BOY [*with pained earnestness*]. Them? My goodness, no!

THE YOUNG WOMAN. Oh, but that isn't normal, is it?

THE BOY. I'm not normal. I don't want to be normal.

THE YOUNG WOMAN. Well, but it would only be natural for you to like those pretty young things, so— Well, *do* run and dance with one of 'em. Won't you, please?

THE BOY [*interrupting*]. No. They haven't got any experience of life. What I like is a woman that's had some experience of life, like you.

THE YOUNG WOMAN. But at your age—

THE BOY. Age hasn't got anything to do with it. The thing that brings a man and a woman together, it's when they have about the same amount of experience of life.

THE YOUNG WOMAN [*absently*]. You think that's it, Mr. Briggs? [*She looks about the room thoughtfully as she speaks.*]

MR. BRIGGS [*with intense seriousness*]. I know it is. I had that feeling the minute I was introduced to you, night before last in the lobby—right by the third column beyond the office news stand, at a quarter after nine o'clock in the evening.

THE YOUNG WOMAN. You did?

MR. BRIGGS. It came over me, and I felt kind of—[*he swallows*] kind of drawn to you, Missuz—Missuz—Missuz—[*He seems to hesitate somewhat emotionally.*]

THE YOUNG WOMAN. My name is Mrs. Curtis. You seem to have forgotten it.

MR. BRIGGS [*swallowing again*]. I haven't. I know it's Curtis. The trouble is, it kind of upsets me to call you *Missuz* Curtis. I thought it was Miss Curtis when I was introduced to you. I didn't know your name was Missuz—Missuz—Missuz Curtis till the clerk told me, early the next morning.

MRS. CURTIS [*frowning a little*]. The clerk told you?

MR. BRIGGS. Yes. I asked him if he'd noticed whether you'd gone in to breakfast yet. He said, "You mean Missuz —Missuz Curtis?" Then I knew you must be married. [*He shakes his head ruefully.*]

MRS. CURTIS [*smilingly*]. Well?

MR. BRIGGS [*thoughtfully*]. Well, it can't be helped.

MRS. CURTIS. I suppose not.

MR. BRIGGS [*brightening a little*]. Well, anyhow, I had that—that sort of *drawn* feeling toward you, the way I *would* get toward a woman that's had some experience of life; but a hotel like this is no place to explain feelings like that. You can't when you're dancing—not the way you want to—and all the rest of the time you had some o' those *old* men hangin' around, or else my mother and sister wanted me for something; because a hotel like this—why, it's terrible the way a young man's mother and sister want him to do somep'n for 'em *all* the time; so this is the first chance I've had.

MRS. CURTIS [*rather urgently*]. Don't you really think you'd better be dancing with some of those young things yonder?

MR. BRIGGS [*puzzled*]. Think I'd *better* be?

MRS. CURTIS. Yes; I do really wish you would. Wouldn't it be a lot more fun than explaining something, as you said, to me?

MR. BRIGGS [*hurriedly*]. No, it wouldn't. I want to explain how I feel about you.

MRS. CURTIS. Please go and dance, Mr. Briggs. I think it would be *much* better if you—

MR. BRIGGS [*rapidly*]. No, it wouldn't. I want to explain how I feel about you, so you'll understand. It's like this, Missuz—[*swallowing again*] Missuz Curtis. I never used to think I'd ever get to feeling this way about—about somebody that was married, but it—it came over me before I knew you *were* married. I already *was* feeling this way before he said "You mean—you mean Missuz—Missuz Curtis?" It'd already—[*he swallows*] happened to me before I knew you were a—a married woman. [*Shaking his head.*] I certainly never *did* think I'd feel this way about a married woman.

MRS. CURTIS. But I'm not—not as you mean it. I'm a widow, Mr. Briggs.

MR. BRIGGS [*as in a dim perplexity*]. A wid— You're a widow? [*He jumps up suddenly, greatly amazed.*] Oh, my!

MRS. CURTIS. What's the matter?

MR. BRIGGS. Oh, my!

MRS. CURTIS. What is it?

MR. BRIGGS. I guess I've got to get used to the idea of it. First I thought you weren't married, and then I was just gettin' used to the idea that you *were,* and now—well, I s'pose it's a good deal better, your bein' a widow, though, except—except for—

MRS. CURTIS. "Except for?"

MR. BRIGGS [*hurriedly*]. Oh, I didn't mean except for your *husband!* I didn't mean your bein' a widow was better for—[*He checks himself and swallows.*]

MRS. CURTIS. Oh!

MR. BRIGGS [*frowning with thought*]. No. I meant more on account of the way my family treats me. My mother and sister—well, to tell the truth, they always seem to think I'm about four years old. They can't seem to *realize;* and when I go and tell 'em you're a *widow*—

MRS. CURTIS. You think they'll be interested in hearing it? I haven't even met them.

MR. BRIGGS. No, but—but of course they've been *talkin'* about you quite a good deal.

MRS. CURTIS. They have?

MR. BRIGGS. You know how people are in a hotel like this: wondering who everybody else *is,* and whether some woman's some old man's wife or his daughter or just a trained nurse, and all so on. Of course my family noticed *you* right away and then after I *met* you of course then they said a *lot* more about you. Golly! [*He shakes his head, indicating that the comment has been unfavorable.*]

MRS. CURTIS. Oh, indeed!

MR. BRIGGS [*ruefully*]. They watch me like a hawk, and I know what they'll say now! When I tell 'em you're a widow, I mean.

MRS. CURTIS. Do you?

MR. BRIGGS [*shaking his head*]. I certainly never thought myself I would ever get to feeling this way about a widow *either!*

MRS. CURTIS. Don't you *really* think you'd better run and dance with one of those—

MR. BRIGGS [*absently*]. No. [*Turning to her suddenly.*] I was goin' to ask you—well, of course, in a—a technical way, so to speak, I mean in a strickly technical way, so to speak, I'm not exactly of age yet, and I suppose I'd have to get my mother's consent, because *she's* a widow, too, and got herself appointed my guardian besides; and the truth is, she's a pretty cold-hearted, bossy kind of a woman, and it's goin' to be a big difficulty gettin' her to see this thing right.

MRS. CURTIS. To see *what* right?

MR. BRIGGS. The way I feel about you. I know it's goin' to be difficult, because I started to talk a little about it last night to my mother and my sister—her name's Jessie—and they behaved—well, they behaved a good deal like two fiends.

MRS. CURTIS. They did?

MR. BRIGGS. I told 'em they didn't know you, and they *haven't* even *met* you, but they treated me like a—like a mere *jest;* and then they got so critical, the way they talked about you, it might be better if they didn't see me with you again for a few days. I can't stand the way they talk after they see me with you.

MRS. CURTIS. Indeed!

MR. BRIGGS. Well, what was I saying: I can't touch my principal till I'm twenty-one on account of the way my father went and tied up his will; but of course my mother and sister think a good many'll be after me on account of it; but, anyhow, I *have* got to feeling this way, and I know I'll *never* get over it, so what I wanted to ask you—well, it's—it's—[*he swallows*] it's just this: I know you *are* a widow and everything like that, but would you be willing to—[*he swallows*] well, of course I don't know how long since you lost your first husband—

MRS. CURTIS [*incredulously*]. What! [*She rises.*]

MR. BRIGGS. I mean I—I don't know how you *would* feel about gettin' married again yet, even if I didn't have my own difficulties about it, but—but—

MRS. CURTIS [*with increased incredulity*]. Are you *proposing* to me, Mr. Briggs?

MR. BRIGGS. Well—uh—yes. [*Then, looking beyond her down the corridor on the right.*] Oh, goodness. They watch me like a hawk! Here comes my mother! [*Dismayed, he turns to the left.*]

MRS. CURTIS [*as he turns*]. Perhaps it was time!

MR. BRIGGS [*dismally*]. There's my sister Jessie!

MRS. CURTIS. What of it?

MR. BRIGGS [*hastily*]. I told you they behave like two fiends when they see me with you. [*Glancing right and left nervously.*] Well, excuse me. [*With perfect gravity he kneels at one end of the settee, which is in the rear, a little left of "center."*] It'll be a good deal better if they don't see me, I expect. [*He promptly crawls under the settee, and the valance conceals him entirely. From this invisibility he appeals with pathetic urgency in a hoarse whisper*]. They'll prob'ly go right on. *Please* wait! Or—if you *haf* to go, come *back!* [MRS. CURTIS *stands dumfounded for a moment; and then, controlling a tendency to laugh immoderately, she turns to examine a print on the left wall as* MR. BRIGGS' *mother enters from the right.* MRS. BRIGGS *is a handsome woman of forty-five or fifty, not now in a gracious mood. She comes in decisively, halts, and stares at* MRS. CURTIS' *back. Then she looks over the room in an annoyed and puzzled manner.* MR. BRIGGS' *sister* JESSIE *comes in from the left. She is a pretty girl of about twenty, but her expression is now rather cross. Her dress and equipment show that she has just come in from the golf course.*]

JESSIE [*calling as she comes in*]. Lancelot! [*She halts, puzzled, and looks inquiringly at her mother.*] Mamma, where's Lancelot? I was sure I saw him in here just a second ago.

MRS. BRIGGS [*grimly*]. So was I. [*After looking at each other, they turn their heads simultaneously and stare at* MRS. CURTIS, *who appears to be interested in the print.*] It's very odd!

JESSIE. Yes, very. [*The two again look at each other and at a little distance appear to consult telepathically, without any change of expression; then they turn once more to look at* MRS. CURTIS.]

MRS. BRIGGS. I beg your pardon, but I'm under the impression that you have met my son.

MRS. CURTIS [*turning*]. Yes?

JESSIE. Wasn't he here just now?

MRS. CURTIS. Yes, he was.

MRS. BRIGGS. Would you be good enough to tell me, did he leave here to go to his room?

MRS. CURTIS [*casually*]. I don't think so; he didn't say so. [*She gives them a little nod, smiling politely, and goes out at the left. They stare after her.*]

JESSIE [*staring after* MRS. CURTIS]. She's a very bold type.

MRS. BRIGGS [*seating herself on the settee*]. Very.

JESSIE [*turning to her*]. I don't see how that little goose got away. You were coming from that direction and I from just yonder. I suppose he thought we'd say something that would embarrass him before her.

MRS. BRIGGS. I suppose she's thirty-five. I've heard of such people, but I never saw one before.

JESSIE. I regard her as distinctly the dangerous type of adventuress.

MRS. BRIGGS. Certainly. In the first place, her not having told the child frankly that she's a widow. One of the clerks told *me* she *was*.

JESSIE. Oh, she did that to flatter him into believing he's a real grown-up " man of the world " having an " affair "!

MRS. BRIGGS. So that when he's sufficiently entangled she can tell him she's a widow—and by that time we don't know *what* he'd do! A country justice of the peace probably!

JESSIE. Last night, when we were trying to teach him a little common sense about strange people in hotels, what was it he said she was? " An angel "—oh, yes!—" One of heaven's highest angels."

MRS. BRIGGS [*grimly*]. He said he wouldn't " listen to one

of heaven's highest angels gettin' talked against by a lot o' women! " I'm sure they heard him in the next suite. [*She rises.*] I suppose you'd better go and see where he slipped out to, Jessie. Of course, he'll try to find *her* again as soon as he can.

JESSIE [*dropping into a chair*]. I played three times round the course. Do you mind if I just sit here a while and rest?

MRS. BRIGGS. Then why don't you go to your room?

JESSIE [*laughing feebly*]. I'm just too tired. I will in a minute. [*With a gesture toward the left entrance.*] Hadn't you better—

MRS. BRIGGS. Keep her in sight? Yes. That's easier than trying to keep *him* in sight. You're going up to your room right away, aren't you?

JESSIE. Yes, in only a minute. I really think you'd better go, mamma. He might—

MRS. BRIGGS. No, I'll see to that! [*She goes out.* JESSIE *stares after her for a moment, glances at a wrist watch, then rises and looks down the corridor beyond the entrance at the right. She appears to derive some satisfaction from what she sees there, returns to her chair and sits in a carefully graceful attitude, her expression demure. A moment later a young man —he is about twenty-five—comes in rather nervously from the right. He pauses near the entrance.*]

THE YOUNG MAN. You!

JESSIE [*softly*]. You!

THE YOUNG MAN. Is your mother—

JESSIE. She's gone.

THE YOUNG MAN [*nervously advancing*]. I—I—

JESSIE. I was afraid maybe we couldn't have this nook to ourselves, after all. My absurd little brother was in here, hanging about that dreadful Mrs. Curtis, and I was afraid they wouldn't go away; but mamma scared 'em both off providentially.

THE YOUNG MAN [*moving a chair close to hers and sitting*]. And so we're alone! [*He speaks with a sentimental hushedness.*] All alone!

JESSIE. All alone, Rupert! This is the only place in the hotel where you *can* be by yourself awhile. That's why I said to meet here.

RUPERT [*nervously*]. You don't think your mother'll be back for a while?

JESSIE. No; she won't.

RUPERT. She hasn't found out I've come, has she?

JESSIE. She hasn't the remotest idea, thank heaven! Nobody dreams you're within hundreds of miles of here. That's one advantage of a big hotel.

RUPERT. Darling—

JESSIE. Yes, darling? [*The settee moves slightly at this, but it is behind them and they do not see it.*]

RUPERT. I can't understand why your mother dislikes me so.

JESSIE [*gravely*]. Well, I suppose her feeling about you is—well, she *says* it's because you're rather poor and I'm—not.

RUPERT. But what makes her think I care about you because you're not?

JESSIE. Well—

RUPERT [*leaning toward her and lowering his voice*]. Darling, there's something I want to ask you—

JESSIE [*leaning toward him and almost whispering*]. Yes, dearest, what is it? [*The settee slowly moves nearer them as their voices become more indistinct.*]

RUPERT. I want to ask you—

JESSIE. Yes?

RUPERT [*with hushed tenderness*]. Do you *really* love me, dearest?

JESSIE [*gazing upward, tranced*]. Oh, dearest, I do! [*The settee goes back to where it came from.*]

RUPERT. But you don't think your mother'll ever change her mind about me?

JESSIE. She never does change her mind.

RUPERT. Then what can we do?

JESSIE [*in a low voice*]. Darling, there's something I

wouldn't say for anything in the world to anybody but you. [*The settee again approaches slightly.*]

RUPERT. Yes?

JESSIE. I think mamma really knows you're not mercenary, but the *real* reason for her opposition to you is pretty selfish. I think it's because she doesn't want me to marry and go away and leave her alone in the world.

RUPERT. But she wouldn't be. She'd still have the companionship of your young brother.

JESSIE [*shaking her head*]. That'd be the same as none. Lancelot seems to have scarcely *any* sense, you see. [*The settee once more retires.*]

RUPERT. Then I don't see what possible hope—

JESSIE [*warning him as she sees some one approaching in the corridor to the right*]. Sh-h-h!

RUPERT [*following her gaze*]. Who *is* that old chap?

JESSIE. It's old Mr. Ingoldsby. He's some old friend of mamma's that happened to turn up here.

RUPERT [*moving as if to withdraw*]. I'd better—

JESSIE [*quickly*]. No; he doesn't know you. Sit still. [*She turns toward* MR. INGOLDSBY *with a smile as he enters.*] Good afternoon, Mr. Ingoldsby. Did you do it in eighty-five again to-day? [INGOLDSBY *is a man of fifty-five or, possibly, sixty. He wears neat knickerbockers and is otherwise sprightly in his outdoor attire. He smiles rather absently as he replies.*]

INGOLDSBY. Eighty-five? No, I—ah—no. I didn't go round to-day. Ah—has Mrs. Briggs been here?

JESSIE. Here?

INGOLDSBY. Yes, I mean—ah—here.

JESSIE. I think she's somewhere looking for Lancelot.

INGOLDSBY. Yes? Ah—I—

JESSIE. Is there something you'd like me to tell her when I see her?

INGOLDSBY [*going toward the left entrance*]. No; I—I— [*He glances at his watch, and looks absently at* JESSIE.] No, I believe I—ah— [*He departs.*]

RUPERT. Well, I *do* hope nobody else'll come poking about like that, because I—

JESSIE. No, darling we're alone again now.

RUPERT. Darling—

JESSIE. Yes, darling?

RUPERT. We've had such difficulties in managing our little interviews; it does seem a precious thing to be near you again.

JESSIE. Oh, it does!

RUPERT. If we could only go away together, where it could *always* be like this—

JESSIE [*dreamily*]. Yes, with the world shut out.

RUPERT. Why can't we—

JESSIE. Hush, darling. [*She sees some one approaching in the corridor on the left. He looks dolefully in that direction.*]

JESSIE. It's that dreadful woman.

RUPERT. I don't know her.

JESSIE. She's been trying to entangle Lancelot, and he's completely lost what slight intelligence he *had*, the little ninny! She's old enough to be his mother. [*The settee makes a slight convulsive movement.*]

RUPERT. Sh! She'll hear you. [MRS. CURTIS *enters from the left. She looks about, with a faint embarrassment.* JESSIE *stares at her, then speaks coldly.*]

JESSIE. I beg your pardon. Did you leave something when you were here with my little brother?

MRS. CURTIS [*smiling constrainedly*]. Did you happen to see a pair of white gloves? [RUPERT *rises and looks in his chair.*]

JESSIE. No. There aren't any here.

MRS. CURTIS. I *may* have left them anywhere of course. [*To* RUPERT.] Don't bother, please. I thought just possibly— [*She stoops slightly and looks behind the settee, and her expression shows a considerable illumination.*] If I *had* left anything here I just wanted to see if it was still—

JESSIE. No; there aren't any gloves here. [*She speaks in a sharp whisper to* RUPERT.] Sit down! [*He does so. Their backs are toward* MRS. CURTIS.]

MRS. CURTIS. No. They don't seem to be. I'm sorry to have disturbed you. [*She moves toward the left entrance as she speaks. The settee follows her. She checks it with a sudden commanding push.*]

JESSIE. I hardly think my little brother will come back *here.* My mother went to look for him.

MRS. CURTIS [*politely*]. No doubt she's found him by this time. [*She looks from the settee to* JESSIE *and* RUPERT, *and back again; and her eyes widen with an intense inward struggle.*]

JESSIE [*turning to look at her coolly*]. Was there anything else?

MRS. CURTIS [*after a moment, during which her inward struggle prevents her from replying*]. Oh—oh, no! I'm so sorry to have disturbed you! [*Her voice threatens to break and she goes out hurriedly, at the left.*]

JESSIE [*staring after her*]. Absolutely brazen! She came back after that idiot *boy!* Thought *he'd* probably come back!

RUPERT. Darling—

JESSIE [*turning to him eagerly*]. Yes, darling—

RUPERT [*looking over her shoulder*]. Oh, my goodness! [*He speaks with intense anguish.*]

JESSIE [*seizing his hand feverishly*]. What's the matter, darling?

RUPERT [*rising*]. It's your mother! [*He strides hastily backward out of sight from the left entrance.*]

JESSIE. Oh, murder!

RUPERT. She didn't see me, but she will if I try to go out here. [*He points to the right entrance.*]

JESSIE. She's coming!

RUPERT. This is awful! [*His despairing eye falls upon the huge Philippine chair in the left rear corner of the room; he rushes to it, turns it round, with its back toward the front, and sits in it, concealed from view. He speaks in a hoarse whisper.*] Darling—

JESSIE. Hush! [*She has checked an impulse to rise and fly; and now, affecting carelessness, she brushes her left sleeve*

with her right hand, crosses her knees, swings her foot, whistles an operatic air and looks at the ceiling. MRS. BRIGGS *enters at the left, frowning.* JESSIE *addresses her cheerfully.*] Back again, mamma? Where's Lancelot?

MRS. BRIGGS [*in an annoyed tone*]. I don't know. I thought you were going straight to your room.

JESSIE. Oh, I am.

MRS. BRIGGS. Have you just been sitting here alone?

JESSIE. Mrs. Curtis came back a minute ago looking for the child.

MRS. BRIGGS. Yes. I saw *her.* Wasn't any one else—

JESSIE [*carelessly*]. Oh, yes; that Mr. Ingoldsby was here too.

MRS. BRIGGS. He was? [*She looks at her watch and then toward the corridor on the left.*] You told me you were very tired and were going straight to your room.

JESSIE [*casually*]. Oh, well, I feel rested now.

MRS. BRIGGS. You should lie down before dressing for dinner.

JESSIE. Why don't *you* do that, mamma? You know how it brightens you up.

MRS. BRIGGS [*frowning*]. Brightens me up! Really!

JESSIE. Oh, I don't mean like a *terribly* aged person, but a nap every day's a good thing for everybody.

MRS. BRIGGS [*stiffly*]. I *took* a nap after lunch. Really it's time you went.

JESSIE. Oh, I'll just sit around a while longer. I rather like to just sit around and do nothing, like this.

MRS. BRIGGS. You *said* you were going, and you ought to do things when you say you're going to do them.

JESSIE. But *why?* Why can't I just sit around here a little longer if I want to?

MRS. BRIGGS. Because you said you—

JESSIE. Oh, what if I did! Haven't I got a right to change my mind?

MRS. BRIGGS. I insist on your lying down for half an hour

before you dress for dinner. What makes you so obstinate about it? Have you any *reason* for wishing not to do this simple thing? Is there anything you're trying to conceal from me, Jessie?

JESSIE [*rising hastily*]. Certainly not!

MRS. BRIGGS [*severely*]. You haven't any particular reason for staying here and not going to your room as you said you would?

JESSIE. No!

MRS. BRIGGS. Then—

JESSIE. Oh, I'll go; but I don't understand why you make such a point of it!

MRS. BRIGGS [*a little flustered*]. A point of it? I? I'm not making a point of it! I don't at all, except—except for your health.

JESSIE [*going*]. My *health!* [*She halts.*] What nonsense!

MRS. BRIGGS. Your health is the only thing to consider. You've started; why don't you *go?*

JESSIE. But what's the *hurry?*

MRS. BRIGGS. Hurry? Oh, none! I just meant, as you *are* going, why shouldn't you *go* and get it over?

JESSIE. What makes you so queer?

MRS. BRIGGS [*with quiet severity*]. Queer? You call your mother queer? It seems to me you're the one that's behaving queerly. Jessie, is there anything you're trying to—

JESSIE. No! Don't get so upset. I'll go! [*She goes out at the left.* MRS. BRIGGS *stares after her for a moment; looks in the opposite direction; then seats herself upon the settee, and from the midst of a handkerchief which she has held crumpled in her hand produces a small gold vanity box. She opens it, gazes in the tiny mirror, touches her hair, glances right and left, and uses a diminutive powder puff quickly; then she closes the box, conceals it in her handkerchief again, and hums a song to herself.* MR. INGOLDSBY *enters at the left. He has an air slightly embarrassed.*]

MRS. BRIGGS [*as if surprised*]. Oh!

INGOLDSBY. Ah—I was here a while ago. It was a little earlier than our—our appointment; if I may call it so. [*He laughs nervously.*]

MRS. BRIGGS [*smiling*]. Well, I suppose it *could* be called an appointment—in a way.

INGOLDSBY. I—I thought—that is, I've noticed this was about the only place in the hotel where there aren't usually a lot of people. I suggested it because—because I had something to say—ah—I mean that I thought it would be as well to say it in private—as it were. That is, if we were alone together, I—ah—that is to say, it's something I couldn't very well say in—in public, so to speak. I mean it would be difficult with other people present.

MRS. BRIGGS [*smiling nervously*]. Is it something very mysterious, Mr. Ingoldsby?

INGOLDSBY. I wish you wouldn't call me that.

MRS. BRIGGS [*seriously*]. You want me to call you Henry?

INGOLDSBY. You did once.

MRS. BRIGGS [*rising in some agitation*]. Yes, but that was pretty long ago.

INGOLDSBY [*sharply*]. I called you Fannie then.

MRS. BRIGGS [*more agitated*]. I don't think we should ever refer to it. When an episode is as long buried as—

INGOLDSBY [*his own agitation increasing*]. Episode? See here, Fannie; you know why I stayed a bachelor. You do know.

MRS. BRIGGS [*protesting quickly*]. No, no! I have no responsibility for that!

INGOLDSBY. Haven't you? When you broke your engagement to me—

MRS. BRIGGS [*crying out, though she suppresses the loudness of her voice*]. It was a misunderstanding, Henry.

INGOLDSBY. It was not. I've held my peace in silence all these years because of my principles. I wouldn't refer to such things with you when you had become a married woman. But I can speak now. You deliberately broke off with me—

MRS. BRIGGS [*choking*]. I didn't!

INGOLDSBY [*with a suppressed passion*]. You did! [*He paces the floor as he goes on.*] You decided Lance Briggs was the better man, and you sent me my ring and letters without a single word explaining why you did it.

MRS. BRIGGS. Oh!

INGOLDSBY. You did!

MRS. BRIGGS. Is it fair to attack me with that now?

INGOLDSBY. Fair? How *dare* you speak of *fairness* to *me?*

MRS. BRIGGS. But you *knew* why I did it.

INGOLDSBY [*bitterly*]. I did indeed! It was simply because you were of a fickle nature. Of course you didn't have the courage to explain *that.*

MRS. BRIGGS [*with great emotion*]. But you don't know the pressure, the awful pressure my mother brought to bear on me. She simply *made* me marry him, Henry. It was night and day, day and night, week in, week out—

INGOLDSBY. And you never for one moment had the simple bravery, the simple *loyalty* to the man you'd given your word to—

MRS. BRIGGS. I was worn out. I was—

INGOLDSBY. You didn't care enough for me to—

MRS. BRIGGS. I *did!*

INGOLDSBY. No! No! No!

MRS. BRIGGS [*piteously*]. Henry, you *must* listen to me! [*She puts her hand on his arm.*]

INGOLDSBY [*moving away from her*]. Why didn't you say that *then?* Why didn't—

MRS. BRIGGS. I loved you—I did, Henry! I simply let my mother break my will and wreck our two lives.

INGOLDSBY. What folly! You were perfectly happy with Briggs. I don't know *how* many people told me you were.

MRS. BRIGGS. I did my duty, and I tried to do it cheerfully; but the scar was always there, Henry.

INGOLDSBY [*harshly*]. I don't believe it!

MRS. BRIGGS [*plaintively*]. It was, Henry. [*She sinks into the chair* JESSIE *has occupied.*]

INGOLDSBY [*swallowing*]. What?

MRS. BRIGGS [*feebly*]. It was, Henry—the scar was always there. [*Her head droops. He walks across the room, then returns to her and looks down upon her.*]

INGOLDSBY [*swallowing*]. Do you know what my life has been?

MRS. BRIGGS [*tremulously, not looking up*]. I—I heard you became very—very prosperous in—in real estate.

INGOLDSBY. Yes. What's that to fill a man's life? Look at the difference. You have children to be a comfort to you in your—your—as you approach middle age. I have nothing.

MRS. BRIGGS [*pathetically, still looking down*]. Oh, I'm sure you have something.

INGOLDSBY. I tell you I have nothing—nothing in the world to make life worth living, not a thing on earth! [*He glances about, then sits beside her and speaks in a very low voice.*] Fannie—Fannie— [*The settee approaches a little nearer.*]

MRS. BRIGGS [*also in a very low voice*]. Well?

INGOLDSBY. Fannie—I—I—Fannie—I— [*His emotion is difficult to control and his voice fades out into a murmur of several slight incoherent sounds, whereupon the settee again moves slightly closer.*]

MRS. BRIGGS. Yes, Henry?

INGOLDSBY. You said your life was wrecked, though you bore it dutifully and—and cheerfully. Mine—*my* life—it was withered!

MRS. BRIGGS [*murmuring*]. Oh—Henry!

INGOLDSBY. But, after all, our lives aren't over.

MRS. BRIGGS [*shaking her down-bent head and protesting in a weak voice*]. Oh, no, no! Don't begin to talk that way.

INGOLDSBY. Fannie, I never got over it. As time went on, I took up my work and tried to do my part in the world, but—but I never got over it, Fannie. I'm not over it now.

MRS. BRIGGS [*turning to him mournfully*]. Oh, yes, you are!

INGOLDSBY [*shaking his head*]. I'm not. I still—I still—I still—I still— [*The settee again moves a little nearer.*]

MRS. BRIGGS. No, no.

INGOLDSBY. I do. I still—I still—

MRS. BRIGGS [*in a faint and tearful protest*]. No, you don't, Henry. You only think you do.

INGOLDSBY. No, I really do. I—I—I care for you yet, Fannie.

MRS. BRIGGS [*recovering herself enough to smile faintly as she shakes her head*]. Oh, my, no!

INGOLDSBY. Fannie, let's—let's save these years that we still have before us. Let's try to make up for that old mistake.

MRS. BRIGGS [*becoming a little brisker*]. Why, how—how—why, we—why, I couldn't think of such a thing!

INGOLDSBY [*solemnly*]. Fannie, I ask you to marry me. [*She stares at him; the settee moves an inch nearer.*]

MRS. BRIGGS. What?

INGOLDSBY. I ask you to marry me.

MRS. BRIGGS. Why, good gracious! I wouldn't have my children know that anybody had said such a thing to me for all the kingdoms on earth!

INGOLDSBY [*earnestly*]. They needn't know it till afterwards.

MRS. BRIGGS [*breathlessly*]. Afterwards? After—after—

INGOLDSBY. You're not going to wreck us both *again,* are you, Fannie?

MRS. BRIGGS [*as in amazement*]. Why, if I'd dreamed you were going to say anything like *this* to me when you asked me to meet you here this afternoon—

INGOLDSBY [*solemnly*]. Fannie, I want you to give me your answer, and to do it now. What do you say?

MRS. BRIGGS [*feebly, with her hand to her breast*]. Oh, my!

INGOLDSBY. Yes; you must.

MRS. BRIGGS. But I haven't had time to *think.* Why, I wouldn't have anybody know about this for—

INGOLDSBY. I want my answer, Fannie—Fannie *dear!*

MRS. BRIGGS [*blankly*]. *Oh,* dear!

INGOLDSBY. Fannie, *dearest!* [*He takes her hand.*]

MRS. BRIGGS. Oh, I wouldn't have anybody know this—

INGOLDSBY. Dearest, dearest Fannie!

MRS. BRIGGS. Why, I wouldn't have anybody know that we— [*They are interrupted by a voice from a mysterious and invisible source. It is a male and adult voice, loudly and emphatically affecting to clear the throat of its origin in the manner of a person wishing to attract the attention of some other person.*]

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE. A-hem! A-a-a-*hem!*

MRS. BRIGGS [*leaping in her chair*]. Good heavens!

INGOLDSBY [*jumping up*]. What was that?

MRS. BRIGGS [*rising*]. Why, it was a man's voice.

INGOLDSBY. It was right here in the room with us.

MRS. BRIGGS [*sinking into her chair*]. Oh, murder!

INGOLDSBY [*staring about the room, notices the Philippine chair with its back turned to the front*]. There's somebody sitting in that chair! [*He starts toward it angrily, but is checked by a suppressed scream from* MRS. BRIGGS.]

MRS. BRIGGS. *Don't!* I'd *much* rather never know who it is. [*Rising.*] Let's get away! [*She totters*].

INGOLDSBY [*undecided, but very angry*]. We ought to know who's spying on us like this.

MRS. BRIGGS [*clutching at him*]. Oh!

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE [*indignantly*]. I'm not spying! This is a public room in a public hotel—

MRS. BRIGGS [*moaning*]. Oh!

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE [*continuing*]. Any guest of this hotel has a right to sit here in peace, and if you *will* go on talking about your private affairs in a public room—

MRS. BRIGGS [*leaning on* INGOLDSBY'S *arm*]. Oh, my!

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE [*continuing heatedly*]. Why, it's your own fault, not mine. I was only warning you not to go any further. I've heard enough of other people's private affairs for one afternoon anyhow.

MRS. BRIGGS [*almost hysterically*]. Oh, let's go! [*She swings the reluctant and angry* INGOLDSBY *toward the left entrance.*] Let's *go!*

INGOLDSBY [*turning to call back angrily*]. I don't know

THE TRYSTING PLACE
The Guilty Chairs

who you are, sir, but when I've seen this lady to a—a place of safety—I *intend* to know. I'll be *back* here, sir.

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE. Fine!

MRS. BRIGGS. Oh, mercy! [*She moves hastily away from* INGOLDSBY *as* JESSIE *suddenly comes in, from the left, confronting them.*]

JESSIE [*halting sharply*]. What in the world's the matter?

MRS. BRIGGS [*in a shaking voice*]. Nothing! Nothing, at all, Jessie. Why should you think anything's the matter?

JESSIE. Why, you're all upset!

MRS. BRIGGS [*trying hard to seem lightly amused, and failing*]. Not at all—not at all! I was just sitting here a moment with Mr. Ingoldsby, chatting over old times and—and then we decided to leave. We decided to leave—that's all. I—I'm— [*Suddenly she starts, and with an incoherent exclamation looks behind her. Then she faces* JESSIE *and, with a painful effort to smile, completes her sentence.*] I'm all right.

JESSIE. Yes, you seem so. Mr. Ingoldsby, will you kindly tell me what you've been saying to my mother to upset her so?

MRS. BRIGGS. But I'm not—

INGOLDSBY [*checking her sharply*]. Miss Briggs, I should not be likely to say anything disrespectful to my old and dear friend, your mother. [*Looking around angrily.*] The truth is, there's an eavesdropping scoundrel concealed in this room, and I—

JESSIE [*alarmed*]. What! Oh, I'm *sure* there isn't.

INGOLDSBY. There is! An eavesdropping—

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE [*angrily*]. This is a public room, I told you. How can *I* help it if you—

INGOLDSBY. I can't stand this. He's behind that chair. [*He breaks away from* MRS. BRIGGS *and* JESSIE, *who both clutch at him.*]

JESSIE [*crying out*]. Don't! *Please* don't!

MRS. BRIGGS [*simultaneously*]. Henry! *Don't!* [*But* INGOLDSBY *has already reached the Philippine chair that has its back turned toward the front of the stage; he seizes* RUPERT *by the collar and drags him forth.* RUPERT *is horrified.*]

INGOLDSBY. Come out of there, you scoundrel. Come out to the light of day.

RUPERT [*hastily*]. I didn't do it. It wasn't *me*.

MRS. BRIGGS. Rupert Smith!

JESSIE [*dolefully*]. Oh, goodness!

INGOLDSBY [*hotly*]. What do you mean by terrorizing a lady?

RUPERT. I didn't! I didn't say a *word!* I *was* behind there, but I couldn't help it. It wasn't *my* voice talking to you.

INGOLDSBY. Then who was it?

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE. If you're anxious for more witnesses, I suggest that you look under the settee.

MRS. BRIGGS [*changing her mind as she is in the act of sinking down upon the settee*]. What!

JESSIE. Look at it! [MRS. BRIGGS *screams faintly, as the settee moves rapidly to the left entrance, evidently meaning to leave the room.*]

INGOLDSBY [*to* RUPERT]. Stop that thing! Catch it! [*They seize the settee just as it is disappearing into the corridor. They drag it back into the room.*]

RUPERT [*trying to lift the settee*]. Come out from under there!

INGOLDSBY. Come out, now!

THE SETTEE. I won't! You lea' me alone!

INGOLDSBY. Both together now—heave! [*They heave, and the settee yields, disclosing* LANCELOT *with his previously smooth hair disheveled and his clothes well rumpled.*]

MRS. BRIGGS [*astonished*]. Lancelot! Oh, gracious me!

INGOLDSBY [*to* LANCELOT]. Shame on you!

RUPERT. Yes, shame on you!

LANCELOT [*resentfully*]. Well, you *would* get me; but I'll make you sorry you did it, both of you! [*He rises, brushing himself and adjusting his attire.*]

INGOLDSBY [*irritably*]. Don't you know better than to frighten ladies and eavesdrop and—

LANCELOT [*warmly*]. I was abs'lootly honorable, because I

couldn't help it and you none of you ever gave me a single chance to get away. *My* conduct is the only one here that hasn't got a stain on it or anything. [*He turns hotly upon* MRS. BRIGGS *and* JESSIE.] I got nothing to reproach myself with, but I'd just like to know what either of you got to say for yourselves *now* about the way you been talkin' about Mrs. Curtis! If you either of you ever just *dare* to soil your lips with even her *name* again, why, I know more *things*—

MRS. BRIGGS. Be quiet, Lancelot.

LANCELOT. Quiet? *Me?* [*He laughs shortly with an irony he could not express in words.*] In the first place, don't call me Lancelot any more. You know how I hate that name, and I been tryin' to break you of it long enough—and now I *will!* I don't care what you call me, but don't call me *that!*

JESSIE [*pointing to the settee*]. How long were you under there?

LANCELOT [*sternly*]. Long enough to get mighty tired of hearin' people callin' each other "Darling"! Good gracious! You don't think I *enjoyed* it, do you? Why, what I heard while I was under there—well, I got a pretty strong constitution, but—

MRS. BRIGGS. Hush! Oh, me!

INGOLDSBY. The voice that spoke didn't sound like Lancelot's voice—

LANCELOT [*turning upon him ominously*]. Did you hear me say not to call me Lancelot? I mean you too.

INGOLDSBY [*with hasty meekness*]. I'll call you anything you like; but I want to know who it was that *spoke*. You say it wasn't you—

LANCELOT [*very emphatically*]. No, it wasn't. I wouldn't 'a' told you to look under the settee, would I?

INGOLDSBY [*with a gesture toward* RUPERT]. And this gentleman says it wasn't he.

RUPERT. Why, it spoke again after I came out.

INGOLDSBY [*quite bewildered*]. So it did. Then who—

LANCELOT. I don't care who it was; what I want to point out, right here and now, before we go any further, why, I'm in

a position to say that I got some plans for my future life and I don't expect to have any intaference with 'em from my family, or from anybody that wants to *join* my family either. All up to now, I've spent my life in a dependent position, so to speak, but after what's happened here lately, and knowin' all the *things* I *do* know— [*His voice has risen during this oration and* JESSIE, *after a glance to the left entrance, attempts to moderate him.*]

JESSIE. Hush! There's somebody—

LANCELOT. I don't care *who's* comin', I'm goin' to say my say. I expect to settle my own future in my own way, and any lady that I may decide to make *another* member of this family—

JESSIE. *Hush!* [*The eyes of* LANCELOT *follow hers to the left entrance and his stern manner is instantly softened.*]

LANCELOT. It's her. [MRS. CURTIS *comes in, but stops uncertainly near the entrance.*]

MRS. CURTIS. Oh! I'm afraid I— [*She turns to go.*]

LANCELOT. Wait. I was just talkin' to 'em about you.

MRS. CURTIS. You were, Mr. Briggs?

LANCELOT [*to the others, reprovingly*]. *She* never calls me Lancelot. Missuz—Missuz Curtis, I didn't have to tell 'em; they'd already found out you were a widow. We don't need to bother about that anyway.

MRS. CURTIS. *We* don't?

LANCELOT. I've found out a good *many* things since I saw you, and I'm goin' to tell you the whole biznuss.

MRS. BRIGGS. Shame!

JESSIE [*with a despairing laugh*]. What would it matter? There's somebody *else* here that knows "the whole biznuss"!

MRS. CURTIS [*struck by this*]. What did you say, Miss Briggs?

INGOLDSBY [*warmly*]. She made a sensible remark, madam. There is a person concealed in this room—

MRS. CURTIS [*impulsively*]. Oh, dear! How did you know?

ALL THE OTHERS. What?

MRS. CURTIS. Nothing.

INGOLDSBY. All right! [*To* RUPERT.] I think I know now where he is, and I'm going to have him out.

MRS. CURTIS [*gasping, then imploringly*]. *Please* stop!

INGOLDSBY [*halting*]. Why?

MRS. CURTIS [*weakly*]. It's a friend of mine.

LANCELOT [*apprehensively.*] A friend of yours?

MRS. CURTIS. I—I'll answer for him. He'll never mention —ah—anything. He really wouldn't be interested. He doesn't know any of you.

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE. No; and doesn't care to!

INGOLDSBY [*angrily*]. Now, I *will*—

MRS. CURTIS. *Please* don't!

INGOLDSBY. I mean to know who he is.

MRS. CURTIS [*pleading*]. Please! If you found him, you'd only see a total stranger to you. But he *wouldn't* be a stranger to quite a lot of people in this hotel that *I* know.

INGOLDSBY [*now shaking his head*]. I'm afraid I don't see it.

MRS. CURTIS [*in a faltering voice*]. He's just here for one day and we—we didn't want any one to know it. I had so many engagements I could only take a short walk in the country with him this morning and—and promise to meet him here at five this afternoon.

LANCELOT [*who has been staring at her painfully*]. But—but—see here!

MRS. CURTIS. Yes, I tried to get you to run away and dance with some nice young thing.

LANCELOT [*pathetically*]. So you could be here with—him?

MRS. CURTIS. I—I believe so.

LANCELOT [*dismally*]. Oh, my!

INGOLDSBY. Madam, what you say doesn't excuse this person's eavesdropping.

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE [*belligerently*]. Why doesn't it? A lady's got a right to keep her engagement a secret as long as she wants to, hasn't she? There are people in this hotel that would know all about it if they saw her with me. [*With*

some bitterness.] That's why she said to meet her here, because it's so quiet!

INGOLDSBY. That doesn't excuse—

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE. It's more your fault than anybody else's. I was awake all last night on a noisy train, and I was quietly *asleep* here—till you woke me up.

INGOLDSBY. Till *who* woke you up?

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE. Till *you* did. I never knew a man that made so much noise about proposing a second marriage.

JESSIE [*amazed*]. Oh, mamma!

MRS. BRIGGS [*with severe dignity*]. I'll speak to you and Mr. Rupert Smith after dinner. Henry, I don't see the propriety of continuing an argument with this interloper, whoever he may be. [*She takes* INGOLDSBY'S *arm.*]

JESSIE. No. Let's *do* get away from here! [*She moves toward the left entrance with* RUPERT.]

INGOLDSBY [*looking back, as he follows with* MRS. BRIGGS; *speaks reprovingly*]. I hope you have some shame for your conduct, sir.

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE. Bless you, my children!

INGOLDSBY [*infuriated*]. Now, I'll— [*He turns to go back.*]

MRS. BRIGGS [*restraining him*]. Henry! [*They go on to the left entrance.* JESSIE *and* RUPERT *have passed out into the corridor.*]

LANCELOT. Did he say " a lady's got a right to keep her—her *engagement*—a secret "?

MRS. CURTIS. Yes.

LANCELOT. To—to—to you?

MRS. CURTIS. Yes, dear.

LANCELOT [*piteously*]. Oh—oh, pshaw!

MRS. BRIGGS [*calling back*]. Lancelot!

LANCELOT [*meekly*]. Yes'm. [*He goes dismally across to the left entrance and pauses.* INGOLDSBY *and* MRS. BRIGGS *have withdrawn, preceding him.*]

MRS. CURTIS [*as he pauses*]. What is it, Mr. Briggs?

LANCELOT [*swallowing*]. Noth—nothin'. [*Exit.*]

MRS. CURTIS [*turning, after a moment's faintly smiling meditation*]. You poor thing!

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE [*in aggrieved tone*]. Well, I should say I am! [*She goes to the Philippine chair, near the right rear corner, and, moving a smaller chair close to it, seats herself and addresses the invisible person, who is evidently sitting in the shelter of the big chair.*]

MRS. CURTIS. After all, there's nobody else here just *now*, darling.

THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE. No. We're alone, darling.

MRS. CURTIS. You poor darling! [*She glances about, then impulsively leans behind the huge back of the Philippine chair as the curtain descends.*]

[CURTAIN.]

SQUARE PEGS *

By

CLIFFORD BAX

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To

H. F. RUBINSTEIN

INTRODUCTION

SQUARE PEGS

Square Pegs was first performed at Farthingstone in England, on June 19, 1919. It is one of the plays that appear regularly on the bills of the Arts League of Service, a small company of players that give creditable dramatic performances in small out of the way villages in England. It was originally described by the author, Clifford Bax, as "a rhymed fantasy for two girls"; it was republished, however, as "a polite satire." The play is dedicated to H. F. Rubinstein, with whom Mr. Bax collaborated in the writing of *Shakespeare* (1921), one of the several plays of recent years based more or less on the little known facts of the great man's life. Some of Clifford Bax's other published works are: *Poems Dramatic and Lyrical, Polite Satires* (which contains two plays besides *Square Pegs*), *A House of Words* (Poems), *Friendship* (An Essay), *Twenty-five Chinese Poems,* and *Antique Pageantry* (Four Plays in Verse).

Square Pegs is a bit of brilliant dialogue, a conversation with little or no dramatic quality in the conventional sense of the words. It is an amusing satire on a type of girl who is, all things considered, less common to-day than she was a generation ago. The modern girl is not romantic; neither her home life nor her social environment nor her education is calculated to turn her eyes back to those days in the sixteenth century when circumstances combined to make Venice a paradise for lovers of beauty.

Gioconda is a more veracious picture of the modern girl than Hilda herself. The "Hilda" that lives across the street or sits next you at school could not be brought to exchange the captain of the football team for all the Bassanios, Lorenzos or Gratianos that ever lolled in gondolas "when the sea was warm in May."

WORD LIST

Bayeux, a town in Normandy in the library of which is preserved the Bayeux tapestry, a strip of linen embroidered in the eleventh century with the story of the Norman Conquest of England.

Borgias, a family prominent in Italian affairs in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. They were noted for their treachery and cruelty as well as for their interest in all forms of beauty.

Boswell Avenue, called after James Boswell (1740-1795), the biographer of that great eighteenth century man of letters, Samuel Johnson. In the famous *Life,* Boswell reports with consummate accuracy the social life of the circle in which Johnson, Goldsmith, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, to mention only a few names, lived and moved.

cinquepace, an old French dance with a five-step movement.

Domesday Book, a Latin register containing the results of a census or survey of England undertaken by order of William the Conqueror.

Etnæan, derived from Etna, a volcano in Sicily; hence violent, heated.

Five Towns, the scene of many of Arnold Bennett's novels; the name he uses to disguise a well-known district in Staffordshire, England, in which the potteries constitute the chief industry. Bennett's novels present realistic pictures of life in this locality.

"Florentine school," the name given to a group of painters whose activities centered about Florence from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. Giotto (1276-1336), Fra Angelico (1387-1455), Botticelli (1444-1510), and Michael Angelo (1475-1564) are the greatest among them.

forlana, a Venetian dance. Pronounced for-lä'na.

gaucherie, awkwardness. Pronounced gō'shri.

Henley Week, the name given to a week in June when regattas are held at the Oxfordshire town of Henley-on-Thames.

lavolte, formerly, a dance somewhat like the waltz or polka.

Merlin's Gate, named after the Welsh enchanter Merlin who acted in the romances as companion and counselor to King Arthur.

Nero (37-68), a Roman emperor notorious for his savage crimes.

pavane, a slow, stately dance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

"Sienese school," the term used to designate certain central Italian painters whose activities are associated with Siena. They flourished here from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. Sassetta (1392-1450) who, like the Florentine Giotto, painted scenes from the life of St. Francis, is one of the most important figures in the Sienese school.

John Addington Symonds (1840-1893), an English writer, especially famous for his fascinating book called *The Renaissance in Italy.*

Tiberius (42 B.C.-37 A.D.), second emperor of Rome, reputed to have been guilty of many vicious and cruel acts.

Torquato Tasso (1544-1595), an Italian poet, author of the famous epic poem, *Jerusalem Delivered,* the subject of which is the First Crusade.

"Venetian school," the designation of a group of painters who lived and worked in Venice in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The most celebrated in this group are Giovanni Bellini (1430 ?-1516), Titian (1477-1576), Giorgione (1478-1510), and Paolo Veronese (1528-1588). The costumes for David Belasco's production of *The Merchant of Venice* were in many instances copies of those appearing in the paintings of the Venetian school.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Do you find the characters of the two girls humorous? Why? Are there any girls in "these United States" that need to be laughed out of romantic notions?

What judgment would you pass on Hilda's way of expressing herself?

Write a dialogue between a modern boy and Ivanhoe's squire.

Have you studied any periods of the past with which Hilda seems familiar?

Write a paragraph on the meaning of Hilda's last speech.

What poem of Browning's suggests the kind of life in Venice that Hilda wished to lead?

What localities in Venice does Gioconda mention?

Bring to class a picture illustrating the work of the "Sienese School," the "Florentine School," or the "Venetian School."

Analyze the figure of speech in the line, "That in all centuries life is goodly wine!"

Look up in *Who's Who* the contemporary British writers mentioned in *Square Pegs* and report upon them. If you wanted additional information, what other reference books should you consult?

Should you recognize the picture of Wells, of Bennett, or of Shaw?

What is the meaning of the title?

What does Clifford Bax mean by calling this piece a "polite satire"?

Compare the characterization of the modern boy in *The Trysting Place* with the characterization of the modern girl in *Square Pegs.* Which is more true to life?

What three plays in this volume may be classified as "fantasies"? Why?

CHARACTERS

HILDA, *a modern girl.*
GIOCONDA, *a sixteenth-century Venetian.*

SQUARE PEGS

SCENE: *A garden. Entrance right and left. Left, a table and two chairs.* (*The general effect should suggest a little lawn which leads outward in several directions.*)

(*The arrival of a taxicab is heard, off. Enter, left,* HILDA *in summer hat and dress and with a light cloak on her arm. She carries a folding-map and a small book.*)

HILDA [*speaking off, left*]. What's that? "The taximeter points," you say,
"To fifteen shillings"? Well, didn't I pay
A pound? What? No, I *haven't* "made a slip."
Surely five shillings was a handsome tip.
[*Sound of a motor-horn growing fainter.*]
The creature's gone. These taxi-men! . . . But wait:
Suppose that isn't really Merlin's Gate,
Nor this the garden where a girl who loathes
Our Twentieth Century (all except the clothes)
May turn the Book of Time to any page
And move within some more romantic age?
The map will show. Yes, there's the gate, and there's
That wall, that table, these two empty chairs . . .
Everything's right. How wonderful, how splendid,
To know that here the roar of time has ended!
Now, let me see . . . [*Consulting her map.*]
If I should take that road
What century should I have for my abode?
"To Ancient Rome." Lovely! [*She starts to go out, right. Then stops.*]
It might be serious,
Though, if I chanced on Nero or Tiberius.

The Romans were rough diamonds. . . . This way here—
So the map says—would lead me to the year
Ten-sixty-six. I won't be such a fool
As go back where I stuck so long at school.
William the First was always dull. I know
He'd make me listen to him—standing so,
With Bayeux hands, knee crookèd, and neck bowed—
While he read all the Domesday Book aloud.
I shan't go there. . . . Now, that's a pretty view! [*Referring to the map.*]
"The Eighteenth Century: Boswell Avenue."
I might try that. But no—that won't do either.
I'd have to wear a wig or tell them why there,
Love coffee-houses more than trees and birds,
And talk in such tremendously long words.
I know, I know! If I can find the way
I'll wander back into the sumptuous day
When, in his gardens near the warm lagoon,
Titian gave feasts under the stars and moon.
That would be heavenly! Those were noble times.
There was a grandeur even about the crimes
Of people like the Borgias . . . and their dresses,
And the sweet way they wore their hair in tresses,
And—oh, and everything! What was Titian's date?
I mustn't err into a time too late;
But how to make quite sure? Suppose I took
My bearings by this little precious book—
Addington Symonds? . . . Oh, that I knew more!
Was it in fifteen-sixty or before?

[*Settling herself in one of the chairs she becomes absorbed in her book. Enter, right,* GIOCONDA *carrying two or three modern novels.*]

GIOCONDA [*speaking off, right*]. I thank you, gondolier.
You drowned my nurse
With true dramatic finish. Take this purse.
So—I am in that Garden where time speeds
Backward or forward as our fancy needs.

How sick I am of cloaks and ambuscades,
Of poison, daggers, moonlight serenades,
Of those dull dances that are all *I* trace—
Pavane, lavolte, forlana, cinquepace—
And the long pageant of our life at Venice!
Now, in the Twentieth Century there is tennis,
With cream and strawberries round a chestnut-tree,
And day-long idling in the June-blue sea,
And soda-fountains, too, and motor-cars,
And Henley Weeks and Russian Ballet "stars."
Oh, what a wealth of joy that century has!
To think that I myself may learn to jazz!
Truly, I judge it has no slightest flaw—
The glorious age of Bennett, Wells, and Shaw.
[*She sets her books on the table and curtsies to them.*]
Gramercy, gentlemen,—inasmuch as you,
Here in your works, have taught me what to do,
How to play hockey, lounge, and bob my hair
In nineteen-twenty, when at last I'm there.
Which path would bring me there, I wonder? How
Choose of so many? If I'm near it now
I ought to hear the roaring of their trains,
Their motor-horns, their humming monoplanes . . .
[*She listens intently for a moment.*]
The very bees are silent . . . [*Seeing* HILDA.]
Who is that?
Surely, unless the books have lied, her hat
Came from renowned "Roulette's," in Portman Square!
A Twentieth-Century girl! *She* will know where
The Spaniards gather and the Black Friars dwell.
[*Kissing her hand, right.*]
Farewell, Rialto! Bridge of Sighs, farewell!
[*She goes up to* HILDA *and curtsies ceremoniously.*]
Dear Signorina . . . Signorina . . . Deep
In Bennett's fragrant works,—or can she sleep?
Could *The Five Towns* have bored her? Let me try
Once more. Most noble Signorina—

HILDA [*starting up*]. Why,
Who are you, lady? By your dress and ways
I think you must have come from Titian's days.
GIOCONDA. Indeed, I do. Old Titian! How he talks!
He did my portrait last July in chalks.
But grant me the great liberty, I pray,
Of asking what your name is—
HILDA. Hilda Gray.
GIOCONDA. How sweet and to the point!
HILDA. And yours?
GIOCONDA. Gioconda
Francesca Violante Giulia della Bionda.
HILDA. A poem in itself! The velvet verse
Of Tasso is not softer to rehearse.
What can have led you to forego an age
When life was an illuminated page
From some superb romance?
GIOCONDA. And what, I wonder,
Can have torn you and your fair time asunder?
HILDA. I'll tell you, for I'm sure you'll sympathize.
I have a lover—
GIOCONDA. That is no surprise.
HILDA. And by the post this morning came a letter—
GIOCONDA. From him?
HILDA. From him.
GIOCONDA. What could have happened better?
HILDA. Ah! naturally you think that Harry writes
Of longing, suicide, and sleepless nights.
Did he, I'd read his letters ten times over—
But you don't know the Twentieth-Century lover.
Oh, for a man who'd write through tears, all swimmily,
And woo me with grand metaphor and simile!
I couldn't bear the slang that Harry used
In asking for my hand.
GIOCONDA. So you refused!

HILDA. Yes, and came here to seek a braver time.
GIOCONDA. How odd! *I* had a letter, all in rhyme,
Brought by a lackey to my father's gate
Just when dawn broke. As if I couldn't wait!
He dashed up, panting, and his horse's mouth
Was flecked with blood and foam . . .
HILDA [*clasping her hands*]. The passionate South!
GIOCONDA. The fellow gave the letter, gasped, went red,
And straightway horse and lackey fell down dead.
I scanned the note, observed the flowery phrases
In which the writer smothered me with praises;
Compared them with the style of Bernard Shaw,
And told him straightway that he might withdraw.
HILDA. If I could see that letter!
GIOCONDA. So you shall,
Sweet friend—or, rather, right you are, old pal.
I'll read it. [*She produces a letter tied with rose-colored ribbon.*]
HILDA. Do! . . . I see his passion's flood
Demands red ink.
GIOCONDA. Oh, dear, no—that's his blood.
Now, listen. Did you ever hear a style
Quite so absurd? I call it simply vile. [*Reading.*]

"Adored Gioconda—glittering star
Unsullied by the dusty world,
Rich rose with leaves but half uncurled,
New Venus in thy dove-drawn car—
Have pity: drive thy wrath afar.
Let Cupid's war-flag be upfurled,
Lest by thy gentle hand be hurled
The mortal bolt that leaves no scar.

"So prays upon his aching knee
Thy humble vassal, once the fear
Of Christendom, but now—woe's me!—
One whose wild prayers Love will not hear,

Who treads the earth and has no home—
Giulio Pandolfo, Duke of Rome."

HILDA. Gioconda, what a lover!
GIOCONDA. So *I* think—
His brain a dictionary, his blood mere ink.
HILDA. *I* mean how rare a lover! Would that mine
Had brains to pen a letter half so fine!
GIOCONDA. How does he write?
HILDA. Write! Would you deign to call
This "writing"—this illiterate blotted scrawl? [*Reading.*]

"Dear Hilda, if you buy *The Star*
To-night, you mustn't for the world
Suppose he got my hair uncurled—
That blighter who kyboshed the car.
He had the worst of it by far
Because the hood on mine was furled.
Good Lord! what steep abuse he hurled!
Yours, Harry—with a nasty scar.

"P.S.—The cut's above the knee,
And won't be right just yet, I fear,
Oh, and what price you marrying me?
Anything doing? Let me hear.
Ring up to-morrow, if you're home.
Where shall we do our bunk? To Rome?"

Now, wasn't that enough to make me mad?
It is a shame! It really is too bad!
"Dear Hilda"—plain "dear!" And what girl could marry
A man who, when proposing, ends "yours, Harry?"
GIOCONDA. I love his downright manner. In my mind
I see him, a tall figure; and behind,
His old two-seater. Yes, I see him plainly—
Close-cropped—
HILDA. Half bald.

SQUARE PEGS
Inside Merlin's Gate

GIOCONDA. Slow-moving—

HILDA. And ungainly.

GIOCONDA. A brow like H. G. Wells' my fancy draws,
An eye like Bennett's and a beard like Shaw's.
I know your Harry—just the English type,
A silent strong man married to his pipe,
With so few words, except about machines,
That he can never tell you what he means:
It were *I* his, and we two went a-walking,
What should that matter? *I* could do the talking.

HILDA. Surely you see, Gioconda, I require
A lover who can make love with some fire.

GIOCONDA. And I a lover so much overcome
By emotion that it leaves him dumb.

HILDA. No poetry? Then, so far as I can tell,
The Twentieth Century ought to suit you well . . .
I've an idea!

GIOCONDA. What is it?

HILDA. This: that you
Show me how best you'd like a man to woo.

GIOCONDA. I will, I will!

HILDA. Imagine, then, that I
Am she for whom you say you'd gladly die.
This is my room at Baystead: that's the street:
You must come in from there . . . [*Leading her left.*]
and then we meet.

GIOCONDA. By Holy Church, a pretty sport to play!
God shield you, Signorina Hilda Gray! [*Exit left.*]

HILDA. Now—what's the time? It must be half-past four.
I'll give him just one minute more.
[*Looking at herself in a pocket-mirror, and making a toilet.*]
I do look horrid. . . . Will he bring
A pearl engagement ring?
I like pearls as a last resort.

Enter GIOCONDA *carrying a pipe and a walking-*

GIOCONDA. Well, and how *are* you? In the pink, o
sport?

HILDA. I'm glad to see you, Harry. Do sit down.

GIOCONDA. "Some" heat to-day, what? Even here. I
town
Perfectly awful. Got a match?

[*She tries in vain to light the pipe from a match stru*
by HILDA.]

I sa
Old thing—you really look top-hole to-day.

HILDA. Well, naturally: I knew that you were coming.

[GIOCONDA *pulls at her pipe in silence, pokes the flo*
with her stick, and shifts it from hand to hand.]

You're very quiet.

GIOCONDA [*with a start*]. Oh! what's that you're thumbin
[*Goes over to* HILDA *and looks over her shoulde*

HILDA. Addington Symonds.

GIOCONDA. Any good?

HILDA. Why—gorgeou
You ought to read it—all about the Borgias.

GIOCONDA. What are they? Oh, I see! I had enough
Up at the 'Varsity of that sort of stuff.
I say—oh, blast the thing, this pipe's a dud! [*She puts t*
pipe on the table.]

HILDA. You smoke too much. They say it slows the bloo
And *that* you simply can't afford. [*Pause.*]

GIOCONDA. I say—

HILDA. Well, what?

GIOCONDA. You really look top-hole to-da

HILDA. How nice! But flattery always was yo

GIOCONDA. I say—

HILDA. That's just it, Harry de

GIOCONDA. I came to ask you something.
a ring.]

A ring like this? Not a bad sort of green.

HILDA [*taking it*]. Emeralds! I worship emeralds. They enthrone
All the luxuriant summer in a stone.
Do let me just see how it looks! The third
Finger, I think, is generally preferred?
How splendid! Won't she be delighted?
GIOCONDA. Who?
HILDA. Your dear Aunt Kate.
GIOCONDA. I bought the thing for you.
HILDA. Harry!
GIOCONDA. *You* know—a what-d'you-call-it ring?
HILDA. Engagement?
GIOCONDA. That's the goods. And in the Spring
The parson gets our guinea. What about it?
HILDA. See, how it fits! I couldn't do without it.
GIOCONDA. Right-o! Then, that's that: good. But if you carry
A diary, jot down, "Next Spring, marry Harry"—
You might forget. You keep a diary?
HILDA [*bringing a small diary from her bag*]. Look—
I did blush—buying an engagement-book!
GIOCONDA. Well, how's the enemy? Good Lord! what a shock!
D'you know, old bean, it's more than five o'clock?
HILDA. You'll have some tea?
GIOCONDA. Can't. Sorry. Told two men
I'd play a foursome with them at 5.10.
You'd better make the fourth.
HILDA. I really can't.
There are some new delphiniums I *must* plant.
GIOCONDA [*going out, left*]. See you to-morrow, then.
HILDA. You'll drive me frantic
If you're not just the teeniest bit romantic!
GIOCONDA. It isn't done. You're absolutely wrong
In asking me to do that stunt. So long!
[*She tosses the pipe and stick off, left.*]

There! Did I play it well? You'd be my wife?
HILDA [*sighing*]. My dear, you played old Harry to the life—
His gaucherie . . .
GIOCONDA. His noble self-command . . .
HILDA. The way he shifts his cane from hand to hand . . .
GIOCONDA. A nervous trick that shows how much he feels . . .
HILDA. All I know is—I'd have a man who kneels
And pours out passion in a style as rippling
As the best Swinburne—or at least as Kipling.
GIOCONDA. Then I'll now be *your* lady. To your part—
Woo me as you'd be wooed!
HILDA. With all my heart!
[*Catching up her cloak, she flings it over her shoulder.*]
Last Miracle of the World, sainted, adored,
Divine Gioconda—hear me, I beg!
GIOCONDA. My lord!
HILDA. Dost know of passion? Is that heart so pure
As not to guess what torments I endure
Who for so long have sighed for thee in vain?
And wilt thou have no pity on my pain?
Wilt thou still spurn me as a thing abhorred
Whose only crime is to love thee?
GIOCONDA. My lord—
HILDA. Stay! I will brook no answer. For thy sake
Did I not paint the town in crimson-lake?
Have I not wrenched thee through thy nunnery-bars?
And bear I not some ninety-seven scars
Taken as I fought my way to thy fair feet?
Think how thy relatives rushed into the street
To save thee—how I put them to the sword
And left them strewn about in heaps!
GIOCONDA. My lord—
HILDA. Had I a boy's light love when I, to win
Thy favour, cut off all thy kith and kin?
Run through the list! Measure my love by that!

Two great-grandfathers (one, I own, was fat);
Five brothers; fourteen uncles; half a score
Of nephews (and I dare say even more);
A brace of maiden-aunts; a second-cousin;
And family connections by the dozen.
Does it not melt that pitiless heart of ice
To see thyself secured at such a price?
GIOCONDA. My lord—
HILDA. Or if indeed thy heart requires
Flame fiercer than my love's Etnæan fires—
Ask what thou wilt, but do not ask that I
Live on. Command me, rather, how to die.
Say in what style thou'dst have me perish here,
So that at least my ardour win one tear!
Choose what thou wilt—I'll execute thy charge—
Nor fear to speak: my repertoire is large.
I can suspend myself upon a rafter;
Fall on my blade, and die with horrid laughter;
Leap from a height; read Bennett's books; or swallow
Poison—and, mark you, with no sweet to follow.
GIOCONDA. My lord—
HILDA. Thy choice is made?
GIOCONDA. My lord—
HILDA. Alack!
GIOCONDA. I have accepted thee ten minutes back.
HILDA. Then—I will deign to live. My castle stands
Four-towered among its olive-silvered lands.
Away! Away! Thou art all heaven to me!
[*She drags* GIOCONDA *right. They break.*]
GIOCONDA. Wonderful! That's Pandolfo to a tee!
HILDA. I should adore him!
GIOCONDA. And I Harry, too
If only you were I and I were you!
But soft! since here we stand beyond the range
Of Time, why don't we swop?
HILDA. You mean "exchange"?
Why not? We will! [*Moving quickly, right.*]

May Titian's age enfold me!

GIOCONDA. Stop! Stop! You can't go yet. You haven't told me
Where I can find the Twentieth Century.

HILDA [*leading her front, and pointing to the audience*]. Then,
Behold its ladies and its gentlemen.

GIOCONDA. What lovely people! . . . All the same, you know,
They're not as I have pictured them.

HILDA. How so?

GIOCONDA. They're all so still. . . . And then—my fancy boggles
To see not one who's wearing motor-goggles.
How can I get among them?

HILDA. You must jump
Down there.

GIOCONDA. But that would mean a dreadful bump!

HILDA. You want to go from fifteen-sixty sheer
To nineteen-twenty. 'Tis a jump, my dear . . .
And so—farewell! I come, I come at last—
O fire and sound and perfumes of the Past! [*She goes out quickly, right.*]

GIOCONDA. Her eyes were green. However hard he tries,
Pandolfo never can resist green eyes.
I know he'll die for her and not for me.
Why did I let her go? It shall not be!

[HILDA *enters, right.*]

HILDA. It shall not be! Why did I let her go?
Harry will love her more than me, I know.
Gioconda!

GIOCONDA. Hilda!

HILDA. Somehow, after all,
I can't let Harry go beyond recall.
I think of his good heart: I know how proud
I'll be to watch him through a dusty cloud
When his new car, balanced upon one tire,

Rolls roistering through the lanes of Devonshire.

GIOCONDA. I too, fair friend, perceive with sudden terror
The greatness of my momentary error.
I mustn't let you risk the enterprise . . .
Pandolfo never could endure green eyes!

HILDA. Let us each make the best of her own age!

GIOCONDA. But sometimes you will write me—just a page?

HILDA. I will indeed. And you?

GIOCONDA. And so will I.
Hilda—farewell!

HILDA. Gioconda, dear—good-bye!

[*Standing in the middle of the stage, they take hands and kiss. Then they come to the front, left and right.*]

So ends our fantasy the slight design
Arisen and gone like sound in summer trees,

GIOCONDA. The burden such as every mind may seize—
That in all centuries life is goodly wine!

HILDA. Which has the more of joy, her age or mine,
We leave you to determine as you please.

GIOCONDA. Mine has the painting-schools—the Sienese,
Venetian and unchallenged Florentine.

HILDA. Mine has the knowledge that our mortal pains
Are fleeing from the skilled physician's arts.

GIOCONDA. Mine the delight of unspoiled hills and plains,
Fair speech, adventure, and romantic hearts.

HILDA. And mine a sense that, by the single sun
That all men share, the world for man is one.

[CURTAIN.]

THE TWISTING OF THE ROPE *

By

DOUGLAS HYDE

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INTRODUCTION

THE TWISTING OF THE ROPE

The Twisting of the Rope was written in Gaelic, the native language of Ireland, by Douglas Hyde. Its English translation is the work of Lady Gregory,[1] who has herself made Hanrahan the subject of a play. Hers is called *Hanrahan's Oath.* On October 21, 1901, Dr. Hyde's play was produced in Dublin, and the author took the leading part. It was the first piece in Gaelic to be acted in any theatre.

Douglas Hyde was born in 1860, the youngest son of the Reverend Arthur Hyde, rector of Frenchpark, County Roscommon. He was destined to be educated in a school in Dublin, but an attack of measles sent him home after his first few days there. He never returned but was tutored at home by his father. He grew up in a community of Irish-speaking peasants and early mastered the language himself. In his boyhood began his preoccupation with ancient Irish myths and legends which, often as not, were preserved only in the memories of the old men and women of the countryside.

When the time came, he went up to Trinity College, Dublin, and in 1884 took his B. A. degree. His quality as an undergraduate is attested by the following conversation reported by a man who was with him at Trinity:

[1] If you wish to know more about Lady Gregory, W. B. Yeats, or any one connected with play writing or play producing in Ireland, consult C. Weygandt, *Irish Plays and Playwrights.*

" ' You do know a lot of languages, Hyde. How many do you know? English, German, Hebrew, Latin, Greek, and French, I suppose? '

" ' Yes, and I can read Italian; but the language I know best is Irish.'

" ' Irish! . . . do you know Irish? '

" ' Yes,' he said quickly, ' I dream in Irish.' "

By this time Hyde had written but not published many poems in Irish.

Soon after obtaining his degree, he went to Canada as a substitute for a friend to teach literature in the State University of New Brunswick. When shortly he returned to Ireland, he resumed his efforts to spread through all classes the knowledge of the Gaelic language.

Gaelic was spoken by all the Irish up to the middle of the seventeenth century. By the beginning of the last century, members of the upper classes spoke it rarely. By 1890 it was the language only of a few peasants in remote districts. In 1893, Dr. Hyde organized the Gaelic League, an organization which had for its objects the teaching of Irish in all places where it had died out, and a general revival of Irish culture. He was president of this League till 1915.

The Irish name by which Dr. Hyde is known transcribes in English as An Craoibhin Aoibhin; this descriptive Gaelic phrase means " the delightful little branch." Dr. Hyde now lives in retirement at Frenchpark.

Besides *The Twisting of the Rope,* Dr. Hyde has written several other one-act plays in Gaelic. They are—

The Bursting of the Bubble, 1903.
The Poorhouse, 1907 (with Lady Gregory).
The Nativity, 1911 (translated by Lady Gregory).

The Marriage, 1911 (translated by Lady Gregory).
The Tinker and the Fairy, 1912 (translated by Miss Butler).
The Lost Saint, 1912 (translated by Lady Gregory).

But Dr. Hyde is not primarily a dramatist, though his influence has been " felt in every folk play that has been written in Ireland since the nineties." His experiments in Gaelicized English, or, as it is sometimes called, Anglo-Irish, showed the way to the greatest of his contemporaries among the Irish playwrights, Synge, Yeats, and Lady Gregory. Dr. Hyde developed this way of writing English which suggests the phrasing and the expressions of Gaelic in his two collections of Irish folk poetry, one called *The Love Songs of Connacht,* the other *The Religious Songs of Connacht.* These volumes contain the Gaelic originals and Dr. Hyde's translations on opposite pages.

The Connacht poet who is the hero of *The Twisting of the Rope* is a well-known figure among the Irish folk. William Butler Yeats has collected the traditions that have grown up around the delightful rascal's name and has used them twice, once in *The Secret Rose* and once in *Stories of Red Hanrahan.* Yeats's version of *The Twisting of the Rope* differs in minor particulars only from the plot of Dr. Hyde's little farce.

We can take up the story of what Red Hanrahan did when he was shut out of the cottage in Yeats's tale: " As to Hanrahan, when he knew he was shut out and that there was neither shelter nor drink nor a girl's ear for him that night, the anger and the courage went out of him, and he went on to where the waves were beating on the strand.

" He sat down on a big stone, and he began swinging his right arm and singing slowly to himself, the way he did

always to hearten himself when every other thing failed him. And whether it was that time or another time he made the song that is called to this day ' The Twisting of the Rope ' . . . is not known." This song translated by Lady Gregory runs thus:

" What was the dead cat that put me in this place,
And all the pretty young girls I left after me?
I came into the house where was the bright love of my heart;
And the old hag put me out by the twisting of the rope.

" If you are mine, be mine by day and by night;
If you are mine, be mine before the world;
If you are mine, be mine with every inch of your heart;
It is my grief you are not with me as a wife this evening.

" It is down in Sligo I got my knowledge of my love;
It is up in Galway I drank my fill with her.
By the strength of my hands, if they do not leave me as I am,
I will do a trick will set these women walking."

WORD LIST [1]

arrah, wisha, indeed, woe is me.
aurah, indeed.
barnacle goose, a goose believed to be hatched from seaweed or " barnacle."
bawn, acushla deelish, dear white beauty. Pronounced bän a-cŭsh'la de'lish.
Connacht, a province in the west of Ireland.
coolin, girl.
Deirdre, betrothed to Conor, the aged king of Ulster, fled from his court with Naoise. They lived happily for some years, but were finally lured back to Ulster, where Naoise was treacherously slain and Deirdre dishonored. This tale is perhaps the most famous of Irish legends. Deirdre's fatal beauty is a favorite theme in Irish literature. John Millington Synge, W. B. Yeats,

[1] The editor thanks Miss Loretta Barry for her help on this word list.

and G. R. Russell ("A. E.") have written plays on the subject. Pronounced dēr'dhrē.

Donal na Greina, famous for his success as a wooer.

girsha, young girl.

kippeen, a little stick. Pronounced ki-pēn'.

lebidins, vicious men.

Maurya, pronounced moi'ra.

Munster, a province in the South of Ireland.

Naoise, see Deirdre. Pronounced nē'shē.

Ni Regaun, daughter of Regan.

ohone, go deo, alas, forever. Pronounced o-hōn gō de'ō.

Oona, pronounced ōō'na; in English generally written Una.

rann, verse, stanza.

Sheamus, pronounced shē'mŭs.

Sheela, pronounced shē'la.

sugaun, of the rope.

Ububu! Ohone-y-o, go deo!, Horrors, oh, woe alas forever.

Usheen after the Fenians, an expression referring probably to Usheen's wild search for his father Finn and the Fianna or Fenians, which occurred when Usheen returned to earth after a three-hundred-year sojourn in fairy land. Usheen, like Thomas the Rhymer in the old ballad, Keats's Knight in *La Belle Dame Sans Merci,* and Irving's Rip Van Winkle, fails to realize how long his visit to the other world has lasted. For the full story of Usheen, see Lady Gregory's *Gods and Fighting Men,* and T. W. Rolleston's *Myths and Legends of the Celtic Race.* Pronounced ŭ'shēn.

FOR SUPPLEMENTARY READING

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Lady Gregory, *Hyacinth Halvey,* in *Seven Short Plays,* New York, 1915.

Lady Gregory, *The Image and Other Plays* (contains *Hanrahan's Oath*), New York and London, 1922.

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Lady Gregory, *Spreading the News,* in *Seven Short Plays,* New York, 1915.

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Cornelius Weygandt, *Irish Plays and Playwrights,* Boston and New York, 1913.

William Butler Yeats, *The Land of Heart's Desire,* in *Selected Poems,* New York, 1921.
William Butler Yeats, *A Pot of Broth,* in *The Hour-Glass and Other Plays,* New York, 1904.
William Butler Yeats, *Stories of Red Hanrahan,* New York, 1914.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

At what point does the action of this play begin?

At what moment does fortune begin to turn against Hanrahan?

How is the character of the wandering poet shown to the audience?

Why is Oona attracted by Hanrahan?

What are the elements of appeal in this little play?

Compare the characters of Hanrahan and Sheamus.

Look up the story of Deirdre and retell it in your own words.

Dramatize some incident in the life of Usheen.

How would Oona relate to a friend of her own age the story of the twisting of the rope? In your composition imitate the language of the play.

Read and report on a one-act play by one of the other Irish dramatists.

CHARACTERS

HANRAHAN, *a wandering poet.*
SHEAMUS O'HERAN, *engaged to* OONA.
MAURYA, *the woman of the house.*
SHEELA, *a neighbour.*
OONA, MAURYA'S *daughter.*
Neighbours and a piper who have come to MAURYA'S *house for a dance.*

THE TWISTING OF THE ROPE

SCENE: *A farmer's house in Munster a hundred years ago. Men and women moving about and standing round the walls as if they had just finished a dance.* HANRAHAN, *in the foreground, talking to* OONA.

The piper is beginning a preparatory drone for another dance, but SHEAMUS *brings him a drink and he stops. A man has come and holds out his hand to* OONA, *as if to lead her out, but she pushes him away.*

OONA. Don't be bothering me now; don't you see I'm listening to what he is saying. [*To* HANRAHAN.] Go on with what you were saying just now.

HANRAHAN. What did that fellow want of you?

OONA. He wanted the next dance with me, but I wouldn't give it to him.

HANRAHAN. And why would you give it to him? Do you think I'd let you dance with any one but myself, and I here. I had no comfort or satisfaction this long time until I came here to-night, and till I saw yourself.

OONA. What comfort am I to you?

HANRAHAN. When a stick is half burned in the fire does it not get comfort when water is poured on it?

OONA. But sure, you are not half burned?

HANRAHAN. I am, and three-quarters of my heart is burned, and scorched and consumed, struggling with the world and the world struggling with me.

OONA. You don't look that bad.

HANRAHAN. Oh, Oona ni Regaun, you have not knowledge of the life of a poor bard, without house or home or havings, but he going and ever going a-drifting through the wide world, without a person with him but himself. There is not

a morning in the week when I rise up that I do not say to myself that it would be better to be in the grave than to be wandering. There is nothing standing to me but the gift I got from God, my share of songs; when I begin upon them, my grief and my trouble go from me, I forget my persecution and my ill luck, and now since I saw you, Oona, I see there is something that is better even than the songs.

OONA. Poetry is a wonderful gift from God, and as long as you have that, you are more rich than the people of stock and store, the people of cows and cattle.

HANRAHAN. Ah, Oona, it is a great blessing, but it is a great curse as well for a man, he to be a poet. Look at me, have I a friend in this world? Is there a man alive who has a wish for me, is there the love of any one at all on me? I am going like a poor lonely barnacle goose throughout the world; like Usheen after the Fenians; every person hates me; you do not hate me, Oona?

OONA. Do not say a thing like that, it is impossible that any one would hate you.

HANRAHAN. Come and we will sit in the corner of the room together, and I will tell you the little song I made for you, it is for you I made it. [*They go to a corner and sit down together.* SHEELA *comes in at the door.*]

SHEELA. I came to you as quick as I could.

MAURYA. And a hundred welcomes to you.

SHEELA. What have you going on now?

MAURYA. Beginning we are, we had one jig, and now the piper is drinking a glass. They'll begin dancing again in a minute when the piper is ready.

SHEELA. There are a good many people gathering in to you to-night. We will have a fine dance.

MAURYA. Maybe so, Sheela, but there's a man of them there, and I'd sooner him out than in.

SHEELA. It's about the long brown man you are talking, isn't it? The man that is in close talk with Oona in the corner. Where is he from and who is he himself?

MAURYA. That's the greatest vagabond ever came into

Ireland; Tumaus Hanrahan they call him, but its Hanrahan the rogue he ought to have been christened by right. Aurah, wasn't there the misfortune on me, him to come in to us at all to-night.

SHEELA. What sort of a person is he? Isn't he a man that makes songs, out of Connacht? I heard talk of him before, and they say there is not another dancer in Ireland so good as him. I would like to see him dance.

MAURYA. Bad luck to the vagabond! It is well I know what sort he is, because there was a kind of friendship between himself and the first husband I had, and it's often I heard from poor Diarmuid—the Lord have mercy on him!—what sort of person he was. He was a schoolmaster down in Connacht, but he used to have every trick worse than another, ever making songs he used to be, and drinking whiskey and setting quarrels afoot among the neighbours with his share of talk. They say there isn't a woman in the five provinces that he wouldn't deceive. He is worse than Donal na Greina long ago. But the end of the story is that the priest routed him out of the parish altogether; he got another place then, and followed on at the same tricks until he was routed out again, and another again with it. Now he has neither place nor house nor anything, but he to be going the country, making songs and getting a night's lodging from the people; nobody will refuse him, because they are afraid of him. He's a great poet, and maybe he'd make a rann on you that would stick to you forever, if you were to anger him.

SHEELA. God preserve us, but what brought him in to-night?

MAURYA. He was travelling the country and he heard there was to be a dance here, and he came in because he knew us, he was rather great with my first husband. It is wonderful how he is making out his way of life at all, and he with nothing but his share of songs. They say that there is no place that he'll go to, that the women don't love him and that the men don't hate him.

SHEELA [*catching* MAURYA *by the shoulder*]. Turn your

head, Maurya, look at him now, himself and your daughter and their heads together; he's whispering in her ear; he's after making a poem for her and he's whispering it in her ear. C the villain, he'll be putting his spells on her now.

MAURYA. Ohone, go deo! isn't it a misfortune that he came. He's talking every moment with Oona since he came in three hours ago. I did my best to separate them from each other, but it failed me. Poor Oona is given up to every sort of old songs and old made-up stories, and she thinks it sweet to be listening to him. The marriage is settled between herself and Sheamus O'Heran there, a quarter from to-day. Look at poor Sheamus at the door, and he watching them. There is grief and hanging of the head on him; it's easy to see that he'd like to choke the vagabond this minute. I am greatly afraid that the head will be turned on Oona with his share of blathering. As sure as I am alive there will come evil out of this night.

SHEELA. And couldn't you put him out?

MAURYA. I could. There's no person here to help him unless there would be a woman or two; but he is a great poet and he has a curse that would split the trees and that would burst the stones. They say the seed will rot in the ground and the milk go from the cows when a poet like him makes a curse, if a person routed him out of the house; but if he were once out, I'll go bail that I wouldn't let him in again.

SHEELA. If himself were to go out willingly, there would be no virtue in his curse then?

MAURYA. There would not, but he will not go out willingly and I cannot rout him out myself for fear of his curse.

SHEELA. Look at poor Sheamus. He is going over to her. [SHEAMUS *gets up and goes over to her.*]

SHEAMUS. Will you dance this reel with me, Oona, as soon as the piper is ready?

HANRAHAN [*rising up*]. I am Tumaus Hanrahan, and I am speaking now to Oona ni Regaun, and as long as she is willing to be talking to me, I will allow no living person to come between us.

SHEAMUS [*without heeding* HANRAHAN]. Will you not dance with me, Oona?

HANRAHAN [*savagely*]. Didn't I tell you now that it was to me Oona ni Regaun was talking? Leave that on the spot, you clown, and do not raise a disturbance here.

SHEAMUS. Oona—

HANRAHAN [*shouting*]. Leave that! [SHEAMUS *goes away and comes over to the two old women.*]

SHEAMUS. Maurya Regaun, I am asking permission of you to throw that ill-mannerly, drunken vagabond out of the house. Myself and my two brothers will put him out if you will allow us; and when he's outside I'll settle with him.

MAURYA. Sheamus, do not; I am afraid of him. That man has a curse, they say, that would split the trees.

SHEAMUS. I don't care if he had a curse that would overthrow the heavens, it is on me it will fall, and I defy him! If he were to kill me on the moment, I will not allow him to put his spells on Oona. Give me leave, Maurya.

SHEELA. Do not, Sheamus. I have a better advice than that.

SHEAMUS. What advice is that?

SHEELA. I have a way in my head to put him out. If you follow my advice he will go out himself as quiet as a lamb, and when you get him out, slap the door on him, and never let him in again.

MAURYA. Luck from God on you, Sheela, and tell us what's in your head.

SHEELA. We will do it as nice and easy as you ever saw. We will put him to twist a hay-rope till he is outside, and then we will shut the door on him.

SHEAMUS. It's easy to say, but not easy to do. He will say to you, "Make a hay-rope yourself."

SHEELA. We will say then that no one ever saw a hay-rope made, that there is no one at all in the house to make the beginning of it.

SHEAMUS. But will *he* believe that we never saw a hay-rope?

SHEELA. He'd believe it, is it? He'd believe anything, he'd believe that himself is king over Ireland when he has a glass taken, as he has now.

SHEAMUS. But what excuse can we make for saying we want a hay-rope?

MAURYA. Can't you think of something yourself, Sheamus?

SHEAMUS. Sure I can say the wind is rising, and I must bind the thatch, or it will be off the house.

SHEELA. But he'll know the wind is not rising if he does but listen at the door. You must think of some other excuse, Sheamus.

SHEAMUS. Wait, I have a good idea now; say that there is a coach upset at the bottom of the hill, and that they are asking for a hay-rope to mend it with. He can't see as far as that from the door, and he won't know it's not true it is.

MAURYA. That's the story, Sheela. Now, Sheamus, go among the people and tell them the secret. Tell them what they have to say, that no one at all in this country ever saw a hay-rope, and put a good skin on the lie yourself. [SHEAMUS *goes from person to person whispering to them, and some of them begin laughing. The piper has begun playing. Three or four couples rise up.*]

HANRAHAN [*after looking at them for a couple of minutes*]. Whisht! Let ye sit down! Do ye call that dragging, dancing? You are tramping the floor like so many cattle. You are as heavy as bullocks, as awkward as asses. May my throat be choked if I would not rather be looking at as many lame ducks hopping on one leg through the house. Leave the floor to Oona ni Regaun and to me.

ONE OF THE MEN GOING TO DANCE. And for what would we leave the floor to you?

HANRAHAN. The swan of the brink of the waves, the royal phœnix, the pearl of the white breast, the Venus amongst the women, Oona ni Regaun is standing up with me, and any place where she rises up the sun and the moon bow to her, and so shall ye yet. She is too handsome, too shy-like for any other woman to be near her. But wait a while! Before I'll show

THE TWISTING OF THE ROPE

The Closing Door

you how the fine Connacht boy can dance, I will give you the poem I made on the star of the province of Munster, on Oona ni Regaun. Get up, O sun among women, and we will sing the song together, verse about, and then we'll show them what right dancing is! [Oona *rises.*]

Hanrahan. She is white Oona of the yellow hair,
The Coolin that was destroying my heart inside me;
She is my secret love and my lasting affection,
I care not for ever for any woman but her.

Oona. O bard of the black eye, it is you
Who have found victory in the world and fame;
I call on yourself and I praise your mouth;
You have set my heart in my breast astray.

Hanrahan. O fair Oona of the golden hair,
My desire, my affection, my love and my store
Herself will go with her bard afar;
She has hurt his heart in his breast greatly.

Oona. I would not think the night long nor the day,
Listening to your fine discourse;
More melodious is your mouth than the singing of the birds,
From my heart in my breast you have found love.

Hanrahan. I walked myself the entire world,
England, Ireland, France and Spain;
I never saw at home or afar
Any girl under the sun like fair Oona.

Oona. I have heard the melodious harp
On the street of Cork playing to us;
More melodious by far did I think your voice
More melodious by far your mouth than that.

HANRAHAN. I was myself one time a poor barnacle goose,
The night was not plain to me more than the day
Until I beheld her, she is the love of my heart,
That banished from me my grief and my misery.

OONA. I was myself on the morning of yesterday
Walking beside the wood at the break of day;
There was a bird there was singing sweetly
How I love love, and is it not beautiful.

[*A shout and a noise, and* SHEAMUS O'HERAN *rushes in.*]

SHEAMUS. Ububu! Ohone-y-o, go deo! The big coach is overthrown at the foot of the hill! The bag in which the letters of the country are is bursted, and there is neither tie nor cord nor rope nor anything to bind it up. They are calling out now for a hay sugaun, whatever kind of thing that is; the letters and the coach will be lost for want of a hay sugaun to bind them.

HANRAHAN. Do not be bothering us; we have our poem done and we are going to dance. The coach does not come this way at all.

SHEAMUS. The coach does come this way now, but sure you're a stranger and you don't know. Doesn't the coach come over the hill now, neighbours?

ALL. It does, it does, surely.

HANRAHAN. I don't care whether it does come or whether it doesn't. I would sooner twenty coaches to be overthrown on the road than the pearl of the white breast to be stopped from dancing to us. Tell the coachman to twist a rope for himself.

SHEAMUS. O murder, he can't. There's that much vigour and fire and activity and courage in the horses that my poor coachman must take them by the heads, it's on the pinch of his life he's able to control them, he's afraid of his soul they'll go from him of a rout. They are neighing like anything, you never saw the like of them for wild horses.

HANRAHAN. Are there no other people in the coach that will make a rope, if the coachman has to be at the horses' heads? Leave that, and let us dance.

SHEAMUS. There are three others in it, but as to one of them, he is one-handed, and another man of them, he's shaking and trembling with the fright he got; it's not in him now to stand up on his two feet with the fear that's on him, and as for the third man, there isn't a person in this country would speak to him about a rope at all, for his own father was hanged with a rope last year for stealing sheep.

HANRAHAN. Then let one of yourselves twist a rope so, and leave the floor to us. [*To* OONA.] Now, O star of women, show me how Juno goes among the gods, or Helen for whom Troy was destroyed. By my word, since Deirdre died, for whom Naoise, son of Usnech, was put to death, her heir is not in Ireland to-day but yourself. Let us begin.

SHEAMUS. Do not begin until we have a rope, we are not able to twist a rope, there's nobody here can twist a rope.

HANRAHAN. There's nobody here is able to twist a rope?

ALL. Nobody at all.

SHEELA. And that's true; nobody in this place ever made a hay sugaun. I don't believe there's a person in this house who ever saw one itself but me. It's well I remember when I was a little girsha that I saw one of them on a goat that my grandfather brought with him out of Connacht. All the people used to be saying: Aurah, what sort of thing is that at all? And he said that it was a sugaun that was in it, and that people used to make the like of that down in Connacht. He said that one man would go holding the hay, and another man twisting it. I'll hold the hay now, and you'll go twisting it.

SHEAMUS. I'll bring in a lock of hay. [*He goes out.*]

HANRAHAN. I will make a dispraising of the province of Munster:

They do not leave the floor to us,
It isn't in them to twist even a sugaun;
The province of Munster without nicety, without prosperity.

Disgust for ever on the province of Munster,
That they do not leave us the floor;
The province of Munster of the foul clumsy people.
They cannot even twist a sugaun!

SHEAMUS [*coming back*]. Here's the hay now.

HANRAHAN. Give it here to me; I'll show ye what the well-learned, handy, honest, clever, sensible Connachtman will do, who has activity and full deftness in his hands, and sense in his head, and courage in his heart, but that the misfortune and the great trouble of the world directed him among the *lebidins* of the province of Munster, without honour, without nobility, without knowledge of the swan beyond the duck, or of the gold beyond the brass, or of the lily beyond the thistle, or of the star of young women and the pearl of the white breast beyond their own share of slatterns. Give me a kippeen. [*A man hands him a stick, he puts a wisp of hay round it, and begins twisting it, and* SHEELA *giving him out the hay.*]

There is a pearl of a woman giving light to us;
She is my love; she is my desire;
She is fair Oona, the gentle queen-woman.
And the Munstermen do not understand half her courtesy.
These Munstermen are blinded by God;
They do not recognize the swan beyond the grey duck,
But she will come with me, my fine Helen,
Where her person and her beauty shall be praised for ever.

Arrah, wisha, wisha, wisha, isn't this the fine village, isn't this the exceeding village! The village where there be that many rogues hanged that the people have no want of ropes with all the ropes that they steal from the hangman!

The sensible Connachtman makes
A rope for himself;
But the Munsterman steals it
From the hangman;
That I may see a fine rope,
A rope of hemp yet

A-stretching on the throats
Of every person here!

On account of one woman only the Greeks departed, and they never stopped, and they never greatly stayed, till they destroyed Troy; and on account of one woman only this village shall be damned, eternally and everlastingly, because they did not understand that Oona ni Regaun is the second Helen, who was born in their midst, and that she overcame in beauty Deirdre and Venus, and all that came before or that will come after her!

But she will come with me, my pearl of a woman,
To the province of Connacht of the fine people,
She will receive feast, wine and meat,
High dances, sport and music!

Oh, wisha, wisha, that the sun may never rise upon this village, and that the stars may never shine on it, and that— [*He is by this time outside the door. All the men make a rush at the door, and shut it.* OONA *runs towards the door, but the women seize her.* SHEAMUS *goes over to her.*]

OONA. Oh, oh, oh, do not put him out, let him back, that is Tumaus Hanrahan; he is a poet, he is a bard, he is a wonderful man. Oh, let him back, do not do that to him!

SHEAMUS. Oh, Oona bawn, acushla deelish, let him be, he is gone now, and his share of spells with him. He will be gone out of your head to-morrow, and you will be gone out of his head. Don't you know that I like you better than a hundred thousand Deirdres, and that you are my one pearl of a woman in the world.

HANRAHAN [*outside, beating on the door*]. Open, open, open, let me in! Oh, my seven hundred thousand curses on you, the curse of the weak and of the strong, the curse of the poets and of the bards upon you! The curse of the priests on you and the friars! The curse of the bishops upon you and

the Pope! The curse of the widows on you and the children! Open! [*He beats at the door again and again.*]

SHEAMUS. I am thankful to ye, neighbours, and Oona will be thankful to ye to-morrow. Beat away, you vagabond! Do your dancing out there with yourself now! Isn't it a fine thing for a man to be listening to the storm outside, and himself quiet and easy beside the fire. Beat away, beat away! Where's Connacht now?

[CURTAIN.]

PADDLY POOLS *

A Little Fairy Play

By

MILES MALLESON

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INTRODUCTION

PADDLY POOLS

Miles Malleson was born at Croydon, England, on May 25, 1888, the son of Edmund Malleson and Myrrha Bithynia Borrell Malleson. Mr. Malleson received his education first at Brighton College, later at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, where he took his B. A. degree. After a course at the Academy of Dramatic Arts, he made his first appearance on the professional stage at the Repertory Theatre, Liverpool, in November, 1911, in a small rôle in Galsworthy's *Justice*. Since then he has played chiefly Shakespearian parts, two of his well-known characterizations being Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Quince.

Early in the Great War he enlisted and was sent to Malta in September, 1914. He was invalided home from there and was discharged in January, 1915.

The following is a list of some of his other plays:

The Little White Thought. A Fantastic Scrap.
Youth, a play in three acts.
Hide and Seek.
The Threshold, a comedy in three acts.
Two Short Plays: Patriotic and Unpatriotic.
Young Heaven (with Jean Cavendish).
A Man of Ideas.
Michael.
The Artist.

FOR SUPPLEMENTARY READING

Miles Malleson, *Maurice's Own Idea, A Little Dream Play,* London, 1918.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

What is meant by "this side" and "over the other side"?

What makes you think that the cruelties of war were uppermost in the mind of the playwright as he wrote this play?

What powers did the Little Old Man and his three friends possess?

To what campaign of the Great War does the Second Friend refer?

If you have read or seen Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird,* compare the characters in that play with those in *Paddly Pools.*

Explain what "paddly pools" are.

At what point in the play does Tony's vision begin?

What was the Little Old Man's plan? What are some practical ways of carrying it out?

In which of his speeches does Tony state the theme of *Paddly Pools?*

If you were going to put on this play, what departments of the school should you call on for help?

Has a play like this one any interest for adults? Why?

Draw the costumes for the characters in *Paddly Pools* who are not represented in the sketch that accompanies the play.

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sleep again.] . . . Grandpa! . . . GRANDPA!! [GRANDPA *grunts.*] I want to know something. When the little postman without a moustache came with that brown letter, tears came out of your eyes and ran all down your face—and you didn't wipe them away—you looked awfully funny. . . . Why? . . . Grandpa, why doesn't Daddy come back?

GRANDPA. Tony.

TONY. Yes, Grandpa?

GRANDPA. Come here. [*The child scrambles up and goes to him.*] Come nearer . . . nearer. My old eyes aren't what they were. There. [*He takes the child's hands in his.*] Tony, I don't want you to ask me these questions . . . not for a little while. . . . Some day you shall know the answers—but not now.

TONY. All right, Grandpa, but when I'm grown up you're going to tell me *everything* I want to know, aren't you?

GRANDPA [*the child's hand in his—very lovingly*]. When you've grown up, Tony, I may know some of the answers. And I shall be beyond the reach of your ears. . . . I think we must all find the answers for ourselves. . . . There, there, run back and play—and no more questions.

TONY [*after selecting a woolly animal to play with*]. Grandpa. . . . [*Silence.*] Grandpa.

GRANDPA. Yes?

TONY. Grandpa—may I ask one more question—only just one more—please?

GRANDPA. Well?

TONY [*suddenly getting big with mystery—creeping close to his grandfather*]. Have you ever seen the Little Old Man who lives over the other side?—all among the tree roots, he lives—and when you look at him he disappears—*I've* seen him.

GRANDPA. What queer things you do get into your head! Now be quiet and let me go on with my snooze. . . . [*He settles himself to sleep.*] And, Tony, you're not to go over the other side by yourself.

TONY [*returning to squat among his toys and play with them—talking to himself*]. All right. But if Daddy'd come

home he'd take me. When I asked Nurse she told me he'd gone out to kill people like the pictures in my book. But I know *that's* not a true answer 'cos Daddy would never hurt anything. He used to show me how to get the rabbits out of the traps without hurting them—and how to lift the baby birds back into their nests—and the daddy bird used to sing to us all the way home to reward us. [*The child sings a song to himself. During the song,* THE LITTLE OLD MAN *appears from the other side and stands outlined against the sky, on the top of the bank. The song continues until* TONY, *a large animal in his arms, gets up and suddenly sees* THE LITTLE OLD MAN *on the bank. A dead pause. The animal drops from his hands.* THE LITTLE OLD MAN *disappears. The child rushes across to his grandfather.*] Grandpa! [GRANDPA *is shaken violently from his sleep.*] The Little Old Man! The Little Old Man! [*He runs up the bank.*] There he is! I can see him! Grandpa! He's beckoning to me.

GRANDPA [*not really awake*]. Tony . . . Tony, come here. [*The child comes down the bank.*] You're not to go over the other side . . . stop here with your toys—and don't disturb me again. [*He settles to sleep. The child creeps up the bank —and waves across to the other side. Then coming back once more to fetch his largest woolly animal to give him courage, he re-climbs the bank.*]

TONY. Little Old Man! Little Old Man! I'm coming! [*And he disappears over the other side. An immediate blackout. Then at once—*]

SCENE II: OVER THE OTHER SIDE. *The signposts and tree trunks on the banks are reversed, as if one was looking at them from the other side.*

Just under the bank, among the tree roots, is THE LITTLE OLD MAN. *His* THREE FRIENDS *are with him.*

LITTLE OLD MAN. I suppose it's somewhere about a thousand years since I've seen any of you—how are you?

First Friend. We are very well, thank you.

Little Old Man. I'm glad. Thank you for coming. I'll tell you at once why I have asked for your help. Some nights ago, I went out for a walk and became part of the sunset; melting into the evening winds I wandered softly across the world. It was the hour when men return home to their women, when children run back to their mothers, when lover creeps out to meet lover. It has always been my favourite time for being out and about; and yet, everywhere I went that night—and round the earth and back I went—everywhere I found suffering, suffering, suffering. I finished as a great storm and came home. And I haven't had a happy moment since. Now it may all be my imagination—that is why I sent to you, my three friends, to ask each of you to visit the world of men. Have you anything to tell me?

First Friend. Yesterday I visited the cities of the Western world. I became the houses in which men live. I became the fires in their grates. I leapt and sprang and threw great dancing shadows on their walls—and old people crouched over me, silent and afraid. I stole up winding stairways and became the sheets and pillows on their beds. And on my whiteness, girls sobbed themselves to sleep, whispering the names of men.

Second Friend. I spread myself, as golden sand, over the deserts of the East. Deep and far I lay, gazing up at the cloudless, breathless blue. Upon me tramped the feet of men and beasts; and red and wet their blood mixed with my yellow dust.

Third Friend. And I became the sea. Far and wide I flung myself against sheer cliffs. I was hurled high in hissing spray. Flecked with my own foam, I rolled and roared and broke against great rocks. Then I lay back, half across the world, kissed by the glinting sun, stirred into swelling rhythm by the winds. And men in great ships of steel cleaved through my greens and blues and purples; men with no eyes for my great beauty or for the flying clouds and changing skies, intent on their own work. And, as I wondered, I knew that the quiet

dead were slipping down within me, down to the vast green soundless gloom beneath my waves.

LITTLE OLD MAN [*after a pause*]. So. I have lived longer than the world—and never before have I known such sorrowing. And I am helpless to make it less. [*Suddenly* TONY'S *song of Scene I is heard quite plainly from behind the bank. They listen.* THE LITTLE OLD MAN *rises suddenly—he is excited.*] I have a plan. . . . I have a plan. . . . Wait. [*He climbs onto the bank. Then* TONY'S *voice—exactly as in Scene I.*]

TONY'S VOICE. Grandpa! The Little Old Man! The Little Old Man! [THE LITTLE OLD MAN *climbs down the bank again and* TONY *immediately appears on the top of it.* THE LITTLE OLD MAN *beckons to him.*]

TONY. There he is! I can see him! Grandpa! He's beckoning to me.

GRANDPA'S VOICE [*exactly as in Scene I*]. Tony . . . Tony come here. [TONY *disappears.*] You're not to go over the other side . . . stop here with your toys and don't disturb me again. [TONY *appears, disappears, and reappears with his woolly animal.*]

TONY. Little Old Man! Little Old Man! I'm coming! [TONY *comes down the bank.*]

LITTLE OLD MAN. How d'you do, Tony?

TONY [*shaking hands politely*]. How d'you do, Little Old Man? but I don't know how you know I'm Tony.

LITTLE OLD MAN. O come, I've known you since you were born. Why, I've looked in to say good-night to you two or three times a week for years.

TONY. But I've never seen you.

LITTLE OLD MAN. You may not have recognized me, perhaps. I usually get into the ray of yellow light from the little blue lamp on the shelf above your bed, and shedding down onto your pillow, I find a wonderful playground in your hair—and occasionally if I've got time to spare when your Grandpa puts out the lamp, I jump into the night-light on the chair—

and climb onto the ceiling—and look down and watch you till you drop to sleep. You don't look as if you really believed me.

TONY. You know about my little blue lamp—and how Grandpa puts it out and the night-light on the chair . . . and yet if you'd been on the ceiling, I couldn't have missed you!

LITTLE OLD MAN. But you don't suppose that now you're looking at ME, do you? [TONY *can only stare.*] Why, bless your soul! I only live in this old body of mine for exactly the same reason as your Grandpa lives in his cottage. It's old and all tumbly down, but it's rather beautiful and it suits me. But it's no more ME than your Grandpa's cottage is your Grandpa.

TONY. It's awfully puzzling.

LITTLE OLD MAN. It's not half so bad as it sounds. Tony, you're going to stay with me just a little while—and when you go back to Grandpa—you'll understand. Excuse me for a moment. [*He turns to his* THREE FRIENDS.] My plan is growing. [*To the* FIRST FRIEND]. Fetch here the Soul of the Short Green Grass—tell him that for a while he is to take charge of the soul of a child. [*Exit* FIRST FRIEND.] You to the Wild Flowers, the Trees, and the Soul of All the Rabbits. Tell them the same. [*Exit* SECOND FRIEND.] You to the Spirits of the Sunset. [*Exit* THIRD FRIEND.]

TONY. Please, if it's lessons, I shall never understand. Nurse says I'm a dunce.

LITTLE OLD MAN. Listen. [TONY *puts his hands behind his back, and feet together, as if he were standing in a classroom.*] Have you ever been to the seaside?

TONY. 'Course I have.

LITTLE OLD MAN. Have you ever noticed when the sea goes out, it leaves lots of little pools behind, among the rocks?

TONY. Paddly pools, yes.

LITTLE OLD MAN. The water in the paddly pools is just the same as the water in the great big sea; and the life in you and me is just the same as the life that is everywhere; the paddly pools run into the great live sea; you and I can do the same.

PADDLY POOLS
A Group on the Other Side

TONY. I'm sure I couldn't repeat that without a mistake. [*A green person bounds onto the stage.*]

LITTLE OLD MAN. Ah! here's a great friend of mine who's going to take care of you for a little while. Let me introduce you. The Soul of the Short Green Grass . . . this is Tony.

TONY [*always polite—holding out his hand*]. How d'you do?

THE SOUL OF THE SHORT GREEN GRASS [*with a tremendous vitality*]. This is splendid. Little human child, you don't know what a glorious time you're going to have. You will clutch tight onto the great clean earth in one long joyous embrace that never ends. You will know the joy of the sun, and the light air, and the dew, and the rain, and the vast quiet nights. You will carpet the roots of the great trees; you will peep down into the secret homes of the wild creatures—their dear eyes will look out at you in the first cool morning mists. You will feel yourself stirring wonderfully with a myriad life, moving, living, loving among your sweet green blades. [*A very beautiful little person has come on.*] Here are the Wild Flowers, the little songs among my grass.

THE WILD FLOWERS [*taking* TONY *by the hand*]. Your spirit shall mingle with my spirit and I will scatter you among the fields and woods and lanes and hedges, and you shall know the joy, the joy, the joy, of making the world beautiful. [THE SOUL OF THE TREES *has entered.*]

THE TREES. I am the Trees. Come with me and you shall stand up—tall and strong and beautiful; gazing, gazing up—learning the never-ceasing wonder of the sky. You shall feel the loving clasp of the brown earth on your roots; and you shall stretch out your arms and twisted fingers, and, as the air wraps you round, know that there is no kiss like the kiss of the wind. You, too, shall feel life moving within your bark—and the dear chattering birds among your branches. You shall learn wisdom from the noises of the day, and greater wisdom from the silence of the night. [*A furry thing has bounded onto the stage.*]

LITTLE OLD MAN. Here's an old friend of yours. This is the Soul of All the Rabbits.

THE SOUL OF ALL THE RABBITS [*whisking and bounding about in magnificently irrepressible animal spirits*]. Manchild—Little Manchild—you're going to be one of us. Have you ever known anything so splendid? [*With delighted squeaks and perhaps a somersault or two, he frolics close around* TONY.] You'll learn the joy of eyes and ears and a nose! The smell of the forest pools! Moonlight games in the woods! The cool, beautiful, dawn air! O! Ho! the joy of just being alive!

TONY. What about old farmer Parkinson's dog?

THE SOUL OF ALL THE RABBITS. Ho! He's a silly old fool of a dog—such a silly old fool. Our mothers taught us to "freeze"—to be so still, the eyes of men can't see us; to keep to the shelter of our friends the thorn bushes, so the hawks can't reach us—to run and double and dodge, so the dogs can't catch us.

TONY. Everything hunts rabbits—I should be frightened of being killed.

LITTLE OLD MAN. You won't know what "being killed" means, so you won't be frightened.

TONY. Little Old Man—perhaps you can tell me something Grandpa never will—where do the rabbits go to when they die?

LITTLE OLD MAN. Of course I can. The life that is in each—comes back to the Soul of All the Rabbits—a little bit wiser than it went out—that's how the race evolves.

TONY. What's evolves?

LITTLE OLD MAN. Well, if lots of rabbits get caught by enemies because they haven't got a particular-coloured coat in a particular kind of country—each little Rabbit Spirit returns to the Soul of All the Rabbits and tells it; and sooner or later, they get the right-coloured coat. [*From without, the sound of children laughing.*] Ah—here they are! It's time we were starting.

TONY. Who are "they," and how are we going to start?

LITTLE OLD MAN. "They" are the Spirits of the Sunset—and we are going to start my favourite way. You will fling yourself in colours across the evening sky until you watch the sun drop over the edge of the world. And then my friends here will look after you. [THE LITTLE OLD MAN *becomes immensely serious.*] Little child of men, I want you to learn a little of the untellable joy of the great life. From the littlest flower that smiles from its mossy bed, to the greatest star that blazes in endless space, how *good* everything is! . . . I shall be waiting for you when you come back. [THE SPIRITS OF THE SUNSET *invade the stage. They can be of various ages and sizes, and should be draped in various sunset colours. The scene should be a great pæan of joy.* THE SPIRITS OF THE SUNSET *speak.*]

I'm going to fall backwards half across the sky and roll headlong down a bank of clouds.

I shall make the winds tear me a great rift in the sky—and then I shall lie in it.

I shall stretch out thinly along the edge of some great cloud, and watch the day fade out.

We are to float about the sun—wrapping him round as he sheds off his robes of colour—making us glorious.

I will splash down to the earth, into the window-panes, and then laugh back at you.

I will climb the highest arches of the sky and fill the dome of heaven with my joy.

I know a river flowing among deep silent woods. I will lean down and see my mirrored beauty in its pools.

And I will dive in you—and bathed in your clear colour, stretch thin fingers pale across the East.

LITTLE OLD MAN. Up and away! Come along, come along. Come along. All of you.

SOME OF THE SPIRITS. Up and away. [*Some of the spirits dancing up the bank, leap from it and disappear—their colours immediately begin to fill the sky.*]

LITTLE OLD MAN [*to some others*]. Now then. Time enough to play when we're in the sky.

THE SPIRITS. Up and away. [*They leap over the bank apparently into the sky.*]

LITTLE OLD MAN [*to some more*]. Children—children—the clouds are waiting. Come!

THE SPIRITS. Up and away. [*They disappear.*]

LITTLE OLD MAN [*to the last of them*]. You were the last yesterday evening. The winds are waiting to sweep you up. Come, up and out over the world.

THE LAST OF THE SPIRITS. Up and away. [THE LITTLE OLD MAN *and* TONY *are alone.*]

LITTLE OLD MAN. And now— [*But suddenly* TONY *bursts into tears.*]

TONY. I don't want to go with you—I'm frightened, I am. You're all doing such funny things! I don't want to *be* anything—only myself.

LITTLE OLD MAN. Tony, this isn't very brave.

TONY. Don't want to be brave—all by myself.

LITTLE OLD MAN. Tony.

TONY. Yes?

LITTLE OLD MAN. Hide your eyes. [TONY *does.* THE LITTLE OLD MAN *turns round. His beard comes off—his cloak falls from him and he is a little girl.*]

THE LITTLE GIRL. Hullo!

TONY. Hullo!!! . . . Where's my Little Old Man gone?

LITTLE GIRL. I'm to take care of you—so you won't be alone. [*She holds out her hand.*] Will you come with me?

TONY. Y-yes. [*They join hands and she leads him up the bank. A black-out.*]

SCENE III: THIS SIDE AGAIN.

[*In a moment it is light again back "on this side."* GRANDPA *sleeps peacefully as we left him.* TONY'S *voice is heard calling.*] Grandpa! Grandpa! Grandpa!! [*He climbs over the bank—and runs to his grandfather.*] Wake up! . . . wake up! wake up!! have you been to sleep all the time?

GRANDPA. All the time! What! Good heavens! it isn't past my tea time, is it? [*He consults his watch.*] No, of course it isn't.

TONY. You mustn't go to sleep again. O Grandpa—such wonderful—wonderful—wonderful adventures I've been having—such lots and lots, I don't know where to begin to tell.

GRANDPA. What *are* you talking about?

TONY [*with a wave of his hand upwards*]. Oooh! I've been up there.

GRANDPA. Tony!

TONY. Yes. Blown into all sorts of shapes, I was—and tumbled right across the sky. I've been a great big tree and a tiny, tiny, tiny, tiny little twig on the end of a branch—and a great big field and a wee soft blade of grass—and all the time the Little Girl was talking to me—

GRANDPA [*rather frightened*]. Tony—Tony—are you awake?

TONY [*unheeding—pointing out to the audience*]. That field—and the woods across and the little silver river and the blue hills beyond—that's all mine.

GRANDPA [*quite frightened*]. Tony!

TONY. Yes. 'Cos I love it. The Little Girl said that was the only way you can really have a thing, by loving it. And I do love it. I love everything *tremendously*. Grandpa, have you ever felt really *close* to things—ooooh—as close—as—when I used to jump into Mummy and Daddy's bed? It's a beauty feeling! Gracious! I forgot. The Little Old Man said he'd be waiting for me. [*He rushes to the top of the bank and stands looking over.*] He's not there. [*But* THE LITTLE OLD MAN'S *voice is heard.*]

LITTLE OLD MAN'S VOICE. My Three Friends!

THE VOICES OF THE THREE FRIENDS. We are here.

LITTLE OLD MAN'S VOICE. My plan is good. Go to the land of men; to every nation and to every home and teach the children what I have taught this child. Only the children—the grown-ups will think it nonsense. We meet again in five hundred years. Till then, good-bye.

THE VOICES OF THE THREE FRIENDS. Five hundred years.

Good-bye. [*The sound of their voices dies away, till it might be the wind sighing through the woods.*]

TONY [*stretching out his arms again*]. All that—all mine. The whole world might belong to every one like that . . . without any barbed wire or quarrelling. Wouldn't that be nice for every one?

GRANDPA. Tony, come here. [*Kissing him with a wise shake of his old head.*] What nonsense you're talking!

[CURTAIN.]

THE QUEEN'S LOST DIGNITY *

A Play for Merry Marionettes

By

ALICE ROSTETTER

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INTRODUCTION

THE QUEEN'S LOST DIGNITY

The author of our puppet play, Alice Rostetter, was born in New York and educated in the public schools. After graduating from Hunter College with an A. B. degree, she taught for a brief period in the elementary grades and in private classes. For the past ten years she has been a teacher of English in the Washington Irving High School in New York. For production by the students of this institution she has written two little plays, *Launcelot-George,* a satire on " the romantic age," and *The Goddess of the Woven Wind,* a dramatization of the origin of silk. The last named has been given by several other high schools in widely separated communities. Miss Rostetter's best known play is, however, *The Widow's Veil,* discovered by the New York Drama League to be one of the sixteen most popular plays for Little Theatres in the United States. *The Widow's Veil* was produced originally in New York by the Provincetown Players, with which organization Miss Rostetter was associated as actor and author for several years.

Miss Rostetter wrote *The Queen's Lost Dignity* for marionettes,[1] but there is no reason why the parts could not be taken by human actors. Maurice Maeterlinck's

[1] This word is derived probably from the term *Mariettes,* or little Marias, the name given to the wooden dolls carried in church parades in Venice.

The Death of Tintagiles was composed also for a puppet theatre but has more often been played by a flesh and blood company.

Until quite recently, with the exception of the Punch and Judy show of county fairs and city parlors, the only puppet theatres in the United States were to be found among Italian communities in large cities. What had been a popular and ancient amusement in Sicily and in other parts of Italy travelled across the Atlantic to the cities of the New World with these immigrants from the South. But in the second decade of the twentieth century native experiments with puppets began to be made in this country in Chicago, in New York, in Cleveland, and in other cities. Now there are a number of puppet shows all over the country. In New York, at the present time, there are at least three marionette theatres in operation. Of these, Tony Sarg's is the best known.

Tony Sarg's puppets are two feet in height. They are controlled by anywhere from a dozen to thirty-six strings or wires which start from one or two wooden "controllers" held in the hands of the operators, or puppeteers, as they are called. The puppeteers speak the lines and at the same time manipulate the strings so that the puppets' actions follow the lines. The puppeteers stand on bridges above the proscenium arch and behind the back drop, and are, of course, completely hidden from the audience. There are two other kinds of puppets, those which are worked by inserting the thumb and two fingers of the operator who holds his hands above his head; and those which are manipulated from below by means of rods and the legs of the puppets. The true marionette, however, is operated from above by strings that are so cunningly attached and so skillfully controlled

that the puppet can simulate perfectly some kinds of human action.

The marionette theatre has a technique of its own. According to Mr. Sarg: "Modern puppets have certain requirements which make it extremely difficult to find suitable plays for the dolls. With so many strings they can make a great many motions which formerly were impossible; but certain things they cannot do without tangling the strings. Then, too, short words and curt sentences are impossible, as the spoken lines must be long enough to allow the marionettes to suit the action to the word. Every motion must have a definite objective. Puppets cannot move aimlessly about the stage; since every gesture is conspicuous, it must mean something; and when several puppets are on the stage at the same time, the one whose lines are being spoken must be the only one in action; the others must be motionless, or the audience receives an impression of confusion.

"The classic repertory of puppet plays could be acted by living actors quite as well as by puppets. In my judgment the puppet drama is a thing apart. The little plays should include feats for which marionettes are specially adapted and should conform not only to the limitations of the actors, but to the atmosphere of unreality and faëry which they create."

Yet many plays never intended for the puppet stage have been acted thereon. In France, for example, about thirty years ago a most effective performance of *The Tempest* was given. A great French writer still living recorded at that time his appreciation of the spectacle in these words: "It is hardly an hour since the curtain of the Petit Théâtre fell upon the harmonious group of Ferdinand and Miranda. I am yet under the spell and,

as Prospero says, 'I yet taste some subtleties of the isle.' What a charming sight! And how true it is that exquisite things when they are naïve are doubly exquisite. And as for me, I feel a sort of pity, mingled with a kind of tenderness, for the little beings of wood and cardboard, dressed in wool and satin, who have just passed before my eyes, making the gestures ordained by the Muses."

In Chicago, only a few years ago, under the direction of Mrs. Maurice Browne, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was given by marionettes. Some idea of the mechanical difficulties of the production may be gathered from the fact that six girls were used to manipulate the thirty puppet characters. Every puppeteer spoke for all the characters she handled. Every girl had an assistant who stood back of her on the platform to receive the puppets who came off the stage. Those who saw this marionette *Midsummer Night's Dream* agree that the fairy characters of the play and the rude mechanicals were acceptably rendered; Hermia, Helena, and their group were inadequately conveyed.

There are many chapters in the history of the marionette, and there are many famous names connected with their history. George Sand and her son, Maurice Sand, as adults had their own toy theatre. Goethe wrote a Faust play for the miniature playhouse of his younger days. Joseph Haydn composed *The Toy Symphonies* for the puppets, and Charles Gounod wrote for them his well-known *Funeral March of a Marionette*.

In England the career of puppets began, as the drama did, in the church. One authority on the early history of the English drama has found that the use of puppets in religious presentations in the church itself "seems to have preceded the use for the same purpose of living and

speaking persons." In England, too, as in all parts of Europe, marionettes gave presentations of miracle plays.

A letter from the Mayor of London, dated 1575, has come down to us in which he orders that "Italian puppets be allowed to settle in the city and to carry on their strange motions as in the past and from time immemorial." *Motion* is the Elizabethan term for a puppet show.

Punch himself came to England from Italy where he went by the name of Pulcinella. Pulcinella, hailing from Naples, was originally a stock character on the Italian stage. Like Harlequin, Pantaloon, Columbine, and Scaramouche, Pulcinella was generally to be found in the cast of characters called for in the comedies that were acted from one end of Italy to the other in the late middle ages. Only the plots of these comedies were agreed upon in advance. The dialogue was improvised. But the costumes, the masks and the accents of the company never varied. Some of these characters from the Italian comedy of masks travelled to England in the puppet showman's bag, and Punch was one of them.

"One could hardly name a single poet from Chaucer to Byron, or a single prose writer from Sir Philip Sidney to Hazlitt in whose works are not to be found abundant information on the subject or frequent allusion to it. The dramatists, above all, beginning with those who are the glory of the reigns of Elizabeth and George I, supply us with the most curious particulars of the repertory, the managers, the stage of the marionettes." [1]

The following jocose reference to puppets is found in an early number of *The Spectator* (March 16, 1711):

"*Sir.* *Covent-Garden, March 13.*

I have been for twenty Years Under-Sexton of this Parish

[1] Quoted in *A Book of Marionettes.*

of St. *Paul's, Covent-Garden,* and have not missed tolling in to Prayers six times in all those Years; which Office I have performed to my great Satisfaction, till this Fortnight last past, during which Time I find my Congregation take the Warning of my Bell, Morning and Evening, to go to a Puppet-Show set forth by one *Powell* under the *Piazzas.* By this Means I have not only lost my two Customers, whom I used to place for Six-pence a-piece over-against Mrs. *Rachel Eye-bright,* but Mrs. *Rachel* her self is gone thither also. There now appear among us none but a few ordinary People, who come to Church only to say their Prayers, so that I have no Work worth speaking of but on *Sundays.* I have placed my Son at the *Piazzas,* to acquaint the Ladies that the Bell rings for Church, and that it stands on the other Side of the *Garden;* but they only laugh at the Child.

I desire you would lay this before all the World, that I may not be made such a Tool for the future, and that Punchinello may chuse Hours less canonical. As things are now, Mr. *Powell* has a full Congregation, while we have a very thin House; which if you can remedy, you will very much oblige,

Sir,

Your, &c."

Dr. Johnson some years later is said to have been as much pleased with a performance of *Macbeth* by marionettes "'as when played by human actors'."

Puppets rather languished in England after the Eighteenth Century, but since the nineties of the last century interest in these miniature performances and their artistic possibilities has not lagged.

FOR SUPPLEMENTARY READING

[1] H. H. Joseph, *A Book of Marionettes (The Making of Marionettes; Construction of a Marionette Stage)*, New York, 1920.
F. F. Mclsaac, *The Tony Sarg Marionette Book*, New York, 1921.
Brander Matthews, *A Book About the Theatre (The Puppet-Play, Past and Present)*, New York, 1916.
Alice L. Rostetter, *The Widow's Veil*, New York, 1920.
Anne Stoddard, *The Renaissance of the Puppet Play, The Century Magazine*, Vol. 74.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Arrange an informal debate on whether marionettes have any advantages over living actors in the presentation of plays.

In what way do *Paddly Pools* and *The Queen's Lost Dignity* resemble each other?

What is the theme of *The Queen's Lost Dignity?*

Describe the construction of puppets. How are they manipulated?

Write an account of any puppet show that you have seen.

What requirements of puppet technique does this play satisfy?

When next you visit a museum, ask to be shown any puppets, ancient or modern.

What are the characteristics of the music written for puppet shows by Haydn and Gounod?

How would the construction, decoration, and lighting of a miniature theater heighten your appreciation of the drama?

Why did *The Spectator* insert a letter about Mr. Powell's puppet shows?

If you know the story of *Macbeth* from Lamb's *Tales,* discuss what characters in the play would best lend themselves to puppet impersonation.

Why is Dr. Samuel Johnson's opinion on any subject worth consideration? This is a question to prepare you for the later work in the English course.

[1] Many facts and quotations in the Introduction are drawn from this book.

THE QUEEN'S LOST DIGNITY

IN FIVE SCENES

1. *The tragedy in the throne room.*
2. *The search: In the Peasant's hut.*
3. *The search:* HUBBLE, *the Road-Mender.*
4. *The search: At the foot of the tree.*
5. *In the throne-room.*

PLACE: *In the realm of Vita-Mora.*
TIME: *Three days.*

CHARACTERS YOU WILL SEE

First, GET-A-QUICK, *the Queen's sweet maid,*
and PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *(in disguise).*
Then PROMENONE, *the Queen's Councillor of State.*
And
THEN DULSONIA, *the Queen of all Vita-Mora.*

* * *

Next, JOHN *and* JOAN, *the poor peasants.*

* * *

And then HUBBLE, *the Road-Mender.*

* * *

* *

*

Some of these people you will see every time, in every scene. Aren't you glad?

THE QUEEN'S LOST DIGNITY

SCENE I: *The throne-room of* DULSONIA, *Queen of Vita-Mora. Centre rear is the very bright throne; it is really gold. The Two Pink Bows of Vita-Mora have been tied to the knobs on the back of the throne.* GET-A-QUICK, DULSONIA'S *serving-maid, is putting the finishing touches on the bow, left. There are three steps leading up to the throne. On the lowest step* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL, *disguised as a page, is kneeling and dusting. Right and left are very beautiful windows, emblazoning the glory of the house of Vita-Mora. Left, on his charger, sits a very proud knight, in blazing blue armor; he is an ancient king of Vita-Mora, one of the great-great-ancestors of the lovely* DULSONIA. *Right, is his wife. She is as fair as he is proud. In her hands she has a basket of bread which she is holding out to a representative of the poor, a young man standing between her and the kneeling crowd of men, women and children. All the crowd is lean and hungry. The great ancestral queen has two long braids of golden hair lying on each side of her neck and falling, of course, to her knees. These braids are tied with pink ribbon and* DULSONIA *the great-great-many-times-great-descendant of this lovely woman wears her hair in the same manner. Right and left are doors, the right leading to the antechamber, the left to* DULSONIA'S *own apartment. Oh, yes! —over the throne is a beautiful canopy, festooned with elegant lace. The curtain opens.*

GET-A-QUICK [*as she puts the finishing touches to the left bow*]. May the two pink bows of Vita-Mora please our Dulsonia. [*Turning to look down at* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL, *who is conscientiously dusting the steps of the throne.*] Do you not think, Henry, that Dulsonia is unhappy? Yesterday

[*coming forward*] she told me in the harshest manner to go-about-my-business. And, Henry, [*with a little catch in her voice*] that was what I was doing. I was taking off her slipper and [PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *looks up in sympathy at* GET-A-QUICK] she—almost yelled. [*The Prince shakes his head in sad affirmation.*] And then [*sitting down on the lowest step*] before she could tell me I got-her-quick her glass of lemonade. Hot. You know she has not been sleeping well lately; and, Henry, she almost—cried.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*looking up in great alarm, for he loves the queen*]. Cried?

GET-A-QUICK. Yes—with temper. With [*looking around to be sure she is not overheard*] *bad* temper. She said—"Oh, you make me sick. Getting my shoes and getting my slippers; getting my this, and getting my—that. Can't I do *anything* for myself." . . . Oh, Henry, what is it? What is the matter? [*A pause.* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *speaks wisely and sadly.*]

HENRY-FLORIZEL. She is not happy.

GET-A-QUICK [*in surprise, not believing*]. Not happy! A queen! the ruler of all this great realm of Vita-Mora. The owner and sole possessor of four thousand bows of pink ribbon. And such lovely hair. As she lies in bed, her two braids reach almost to her white ankles. They touch the floor when she sits on her throne.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*looking up quickly, like a lover*]. Yes! They lie like pools of sunshine in her lap as she sings and plays her harp.

QET-A-QUICK [*sharply, jealous*]. Henry, do you love the Queen? You, a servant! [PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *drops his head and turns to his work of dusting the second step.*] Henry, do you, do you *love* the Queen?

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*looking up sadly, sweetly*]. Get-a-Quick, do you? [GET-A-QUICK *gives a twitch of her shoulder as she thinks she doesn't.*] Your lovely queen, Dulsonia of the two golden braids? [GET-A-QUICK *remembers the beauty of the Queen.*]

GET-A-QUICK [*nodding her head, in a soft tone*]. Yes.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. And so do I. [GET-A-QUICK *turns on him suspicious, as* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *adds quickly*] I love all men, and women too. Why [*looking up sweetly and shaking the dust from his duster*] I love even you.

GET-A-QUICK [*smiling over, quickly*]. Oh, Henry, you should not be doing this common work—you so noble—so— [*She turns from him, puts her hand to her heart, lifts her eyes —sighs. Turning back.*] Give *me* the duster.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*drawing the hand with the duster away*]. No, no, dear Get-a-Quick.

GET-A-QUICK [*coquettish and a little obstinate*]. I insist, sweet— [*At this moment, when both are insisting, a clear shrill bugle sounds, right.* GET-A-QUICK *drops her end of the duster and with frightened, eager movements goes first right and then left, touching the two pink bows to make them even more perfect.* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *slides his duster quickly left on the top step and runs down and about, right, and hangs the duster on a peg in the side of the throne. He then dusts off his hands quickly, looking right, brushes out the creases in his knickerbockers, smooths nervously the bow-tie at his throat, and then, just as* PROMENONE *appears, right, stands right of the throne.* GET-A-QUICK *pats her two short pig-tails and straightens out her apron.* PROMENONE *promenades solemnly, left, then right, inspecting everything. He has a scroll in his left hand which is held importantly against his bosom. He is a short square man with a bald head and a large nose. He is dressed in satin and yards of lace. His white calves are beautiful but big. He is so different from* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL, *who, though in simple green, is very dignified and graceful, and romantic.* HENRY'S *hair is dark, and long, and straight; his eyes are solemn but kind. He sighs often. There are many gold small buttons, very shiny and very close together, down the front of his jacket. On his pumps are large gold buckles. He is the favorite page of* DULSONIA. PROMENONE *is now inspecting the lower left corner of the left-hand window.*]

PROMENONE [*blowing on the glass*]. Huh! This window is not immaculate. On this glass I see the shadow of the foot-print of the right rear leg of a fly. [*He looks sternly towards* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL, *but the Prince has turned right and with his hand on his heart is looking at the open door where the Queen,* DULSONIA, *is about to enter.* PROMENONE *gives a jerk of surprise, bends to look more closely; speaks in suspicion.*] What! You do not listen—

GET-A-QUICK [*coming forward quickly*]. Inspect the two pink bows, O great Promenone, the two pink bows of Vita-Mora. [PROMENONE *bows with condescension. He is pleased. He waddles with slow dignity to the right bow.*]

PROMENONE [*with suspended approval*]. Hummh? [*To the left.*] Hhum. Excellent—excellent. [*There is another silvery blast of the bugle note, and* DULSONIA, *the Queen, appears, right; she is facing in towards the antechamber.* PROMENONE *waddles swiftly to left front and bows deeply.* GET-A-QUICK *runs back and falls in curtsy left of throne.* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *drops to one knee, his face raised towards his lady-love, the Queen.*]

THE QUEEN [*looking back into the antechamber and talking in a peevish, irritated voice*]. No! Don't come in here. I want to be alone for once. And—wait. You, Duchess Slug-a-bed, have a curl awry. Yes, that one. See that it lies straight, on your shoulder, to-morrow. And you, Sir Count Spic-a-dandy, there is too high a polish on your thumb-nail. No, the left one. You have a stupid, unartistic valet. Dismiss him. And now go. All of you. Oh, do hurry up. [*As she turns in, she gives a heavy sigh, for she is truly tired. She takes a few steps forward, her back now to* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL. *She turns sharply to* GET-A-QUICK.] Where's Henry?

PROMENONE [*coming forward with importance*]. Your Majest—

THE QUEEN [*turning, angry*]. Did I—

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*who has risen and runs forward, drops to one knee and bows his head*]. Here, Your Majesty.

THE QUEEN [*as if she wasn't interested, and turning away rudely*]. Oh. I suppose it's time to ascend that throne now. [*She faces left, holds out in her right hand the sceptre, stiff and important. She lifts her chin high and haughty. Her body is very royal.* PROMENONE *hurries in a waddle to the door, right, and calls in, like a crier.*]

PROMENONE. The Queen, Dulsonia of the realm of Vita-Mora, now ascends the throne. [*One nervous note bursts out into the air all by itself. Every one is horrified, but keeps still and ceremonious. After a moment two silver trumpets, high, clear and thin, play the Ascension-to-the-Throne March.*[1] DULSONIA *proceeds to the foot of the throne, turns, mounts, and at the correct notes beautifully seats herself. At the last note she places her right elbow on the arm of the throne; her right hand still holds the sceptre erect. There is a pause of admiration. Then the Queen leans back and rests the sceptre in the crook of her right arm. She looks lovely.* PROMENONE *walks with dignity to the foot of the throne. After the second beat of the silence, the Queen speaks.*]

THE QUEEN [*looking off stage, right*]. That was very good music. I'm glad I wrote it. [*To* PROMENONE.] But tell Pfeiffer not to blow so hard. He sounded nervous and nearly all the notes were a shade, just a shade sharp.

PROMENONE [*starting right*]. Yes, Your Majesty.

THE QUEEN. Not now. Oh, these stupid— [*Looking up at the ceiling in a temper.* PROMENONE *bows and backs, right. In a slightly pleasant tone.*] Well, Get-a-Quick. How's your mother, dear?

GET-A-QUICK [*standing and curtsying*]. Please, ma'am, very poorly. And I'd like to go see her if Your Majesty can spare—

THE QUEEN. Is my toast ready, and my tea?

GET-A-QUICK. The water's boiling, Your Majesty, and the toast is—

THE QUEEN. Is my book open, at the proper place?

GET-A-QUICK. Yes, Your Majesty, where the princess kneels

[1] See page 342.

and kisses the page who is— [*At this,* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL, *unseen by the others, starts.*]

THE QUEEN [*hastily*]. I know the place. Well, you may take a holiday.

GET-A-QUICK. Oh!

THE QUEEN. For five minutes.

GET-A-QUICK. Oh. But it takes me two and a half minutes to get there, if I run.

THE QUEEN. You should run. It's very good for you. I run myself, every day, three times around the fish-pond and back. How sick is your mother? [GET-A-QUICK *considers too long.*] The truth now, Get-a-Quick.

GET-A-QUICK [*ingratiatingly*]. Well, she took one of your pink pills.

THE QUEEN. *One.*

GET-A-QUICK. Each hour, and she's feeling better— [*As* QUEEN *considers and remains silent.*] Each hour.

THE QUEEN. Ten minutes. You may take ten minutes, there and back.

GET-A-QUICK [*pleased*]. Oh.

THE QUEEN. And don't stop to eat berries on the way.

GET-A-QUICK. No, Your Majesty. Thank you, Your Majesty. [*With much curtsying she exits, left.*]

THE QUEEN [*in a bored tone to* PROMENONE]. Now, Promenone— [*gaping*] the monthly report. [*With very much dignity, too much, and humming the very tune to which the* QUEEN *ascended the throne,* PROMENONE *comes forward, stands still, then bows. He holds out the scroll in his left hand.*] And make it short.

PROMENONE. Yes, Your Majesty. I'll give you only the beginning and the middle and the end.

THE QUEEN. Leave out the middle. [*He bows acquiescence and gives a sigh. He starts to unroll it.*] Don't read it. Just tell me the most important parts.

PROMENONE. But it won't be legal unless it's read.

THE QUEEN [*with desperate patience*]. Read.

PROMENONE [*unrolling it*]. To Dulsonia, Queen of the fair

realms and contiguous counties of Vita-Mora, the Council of State, through the unworthy pen, [*looking up*] at present the unworthy lips, of Promenone, Chief Councillor, Knight of the Blue Garter and the Pink Bow, Count of—

THE QUEEN. Cut that out.

PROMENONE. Cu— If I leave that— [*At the glance of the* QUEEN, *bows.*] Begs to report the following: May 1, imports to value of 18,000 ducats and 4 centi-moro; exports to value of 564,000 ducats and 9 centi-moro.

THE QUEEN [*nodding approval and deep pleasure*]. Good.

PROMENONE. Emigrants, 4. [QUEEN *shows disapproval.* PROMENONE *continues quickly.*] AND, Immigrants: 49, the first week; 94, the second week; 102, the third week; 201, the fourth week, not counting Henry, the page. [*Kindly to* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL.] But we'll have to count Henry. He's very important.

THE QUEEN. Ve-ry.

PROMENONE. Quite a member of the family. [*Making the emendation.*] That makes 202. Expenditures—Item One: Erection of Public Buildings—five. All [*smiling*] paid for from the private purse of our Queen. Item Two: In honor of the great ancestor, Dulsonia Agatha [*bowing toward window, right*], great, great—

THE QUEEN. Yes, nine greats.

PROMENONE. Grandmother of Dulsonia, the present queen—

THE QUEEN. How many?

PROMENONE. To the poor 444,444 loaves of good white bread, and 24 rolls.

THE QUEEN. Why the rolls?

PROMENONE. For the 24 babies born in your kingdom during the month of May. They're christening presents. It's a new custom.

THE QUEEN. Very nice. Very pretty. But we ought to have more. More babies. See that there are twice as many next month. Can't have too many!

PROMENONE [*smiling kindly*]. No, Your Majesty. Ah,

never since the day of your great ancestor [*pointing left*] Bruton, of the wolf heart, have we had a ruler so vigorous so wise, so, I might say,—

THE QUEEN. Well, that's finished. Put it away. Tel everybody I was very much pleased. And now, Henry.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*in his joy, choking out loud, and then turning the choke into a cough*]. Oh.

THE QUEEN [*coldly*]. You have a cold, Henry?

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Oh, no, no. Just a particle of dust from Your Majesty's throne. [*Bowing.*] I must have—

THE QUEEN [*kindly*]. Oh, that's all right. What news from Amor-Vitens, your native home?

PROMENONE [*insistent*]. If you please, Your Majesty, I have the official news. King Placido, the Gentle, ruler of fair Amor-Vitens, is very poorly, and intends the first of next month to resign his throne in favor of Prince Henry-Florizel

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*on a gasp*]. Oh. [*Stooping as they both look at him in surprise.*] A pin. Your Majesty might have stepped—

PROMENONE. In favor of Prince Henry-Florizel, called the Wise. In that event Prince Henry-Florizel then becoming King of all— [QUEEN *raises hand impatiently, but* PROMENONE *goes on.*] That makes him of equal rank with yourself Your lands are contiguous. We, the nobles of Vita-Mora—

THE QUEEN. Well, you needn't— [*She considers.*] No you needn't. Any man who calls himself the Wise is apt to be a—

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*with pain*]. Fool?

PROMENONE. But, Dulsonia, *he* does not call himself the Wise; it is his loving subjects that have given him that— that—

THE QUEEN. Cognomen.

PROMENONE. Exactly. And they say—of course I have never seen him—that he is as handsome as he is wise [PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *unnoticed is about to make a protest.*]

THE QUEEN. That might well be and he be not much t

look at. [*A pained expression crumples the face of* PROMENONE.] No, I suppose that isn't very elegant, very queen-ish. But, Promenone, sometimes I get tired of—of cognomens, and talking, and things of state. [*Eagerly.*] Now, I'm sure, Promenone, if you'd just let me rule my own way, I—

PROMENONE. Oh, no, Your Majesty. Why, the Queen—

THE QUEEN [*wearily*]. All right, Alcibiades Promenone, Knight of the Blue Garter and the Pink Bow, Count of and so forth. You may go. [*He starts*—QUEEN, *louder and getting very angry.*] You may— [PROMENONE *raises a dignified hand and stops her. Then he turns and exits with slow pomp.* DULSONIA *follows him with her eyes, and then in great weariness and boredom puts her sceptre in her lap and her chin on her hand and sighs.* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *shifts in nervous sympathy from one foot to the other. She sees him and smiles. Moving forward, a bit nearer to his side.*] Henry— [PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *starts to drop on one knee.*] No, don't kneel. [*She looks around the room.*] Sit on the step of my throne, the lowest step, and we'll have our morning talk. [PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *comes forward quick and so happy he can hardly walk. She leans forward and speaks, oh, so kindly.*] Did you practice this morning?

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Yes, Your Majesty. Four hours.

THE QUEEN. I think you play my favorite song more sweetly than any page—or musician—I ever had. [*He starts to rise, his hand on his heart.*] No, don't thank me. It's just the truth. Don't you think, Henry, nothing but the truth should be spoken between—friends?

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*with great joy*]. Friends!

THE QUEEN. Yes, friends. I really feel quite democratic—[*considering*] to *you.*

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*laughing aside to himself and then turning to her*]. Just as if I were a king, too, or a—prince.

THE QUEEN. Just. . . . What kind of queen do you think I make, Henry? [*He hesitates.*] Now, the truth.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*hedging*]. I think you are very beautiful.

THE QUEEN [*disappointed*]. Of course. But as a queen Am I—queenly?

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*unhappy, hesitating more*]. Sometimes [*Adding quickly, as she shows her surprise.*] You keep queenly rhythm when you ascend the throne. You never mis a beat.

THE QUEEN [*coldly*]. Of course. But I'm not asking yo what kind of musician Dulsonia is. But what kind of queen Have I—dignity?

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*very unhappy*]. I told you. Some times— When you ascend the throne,—

THE QUEEN [*with command*]. Answer me the truth. Whe have I been— [*Sarcastically.*] May I ask when I have bee *lacking* in dignity?

HENRY-FLORIZEL. I never said—

THE QUEEN [*like a judge, all icy*]. Are we—friends—o not?

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*very despairing*]. Friends.

THE QUEEN. Then, the truth.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*suddenly eager*]. I'll tell you when yo seemed, to me, to have the most dignity. When you gave Ge a-Quick her holiday. When you asked after her mother.

THE QUEEN [*puzzled*]. Get-a-Quick! Oh, when I gav her ten minutes instead of five. That was very generous.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*unwilling, but telling the truth*]. N . . . It was because you felt kindly, because you wanted serve her.

THE QUEEN. Me serve Get-a-Quick!—I! a *serv*—

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*quickly*]. You wanted to do somethin for her, to make her happy. For a minute you forgot you we a queen. You turned toward her with—with love in your fac all your love in your face, and eyes. Then you had mo dignity. The true dignity of service.

THE QUEEN [*a little dryly*]. I did? [*She ponders*] That's a new idea. You mean that when I was serving he Get-a-Quick, my servant, I was more of a queen than—tha

when I ordered that fool of a Spic-a-dandy to take some polish off his nails, and that stupid Slug-a-bed—

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Yes.

THE QUEEN. You mean that when you are dusting the steps of my throne you are more of a king, more royal, than I am when I ascend those same steps?

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*flustered*]. Oh—oh—that depends.

THE QUEEN. Well, what depends? I'm trying to understand.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. It depends—it depends on how I dust them. If I do it with—with—

THE QUEEN [*trying to understand, also encouraging*]. Love in your heart.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Well, such a duster would have the dignity of service, he would be a king among men even if—I'm not trying to praise myself, Dulsonia, I'm just—

THE QUEEN. No, you're a very wonderful man—I mean—duster. What about Get-a-Quick? [PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *smiles happily.*] Has she dignity? She makes my toast and tea every day and does lots of other things. Is she— [*She sees his smile.*]

HENRY-FLORIZEL. She's a very good woman.

THE QUEEN [*coldly*]. Is she more of a queen than I am? Has she more— [PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *alarmed, looks left and right and tries not to answer.*] Is she?

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*in a small, unhappy voice*]. Yes. [*The* QUEEN *flings her hands up with anger, grabs her sceptre, and starts, in a temper, to run down the steps.*]

THE QUEEN. Get out of the way.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. You asked, Your Majesty, for the truth.

THE QUEEN. Well, I must say—well—well— [*Turning.*] Is she sweeter than I am? [*No answer. The* QUEEN *stamps her foot.*] Is she?

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*hardly audible, nodding his head*]. Yes.

THE QUEEN. Is she more—more charming, more lovable?

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*in an agony*]. Oh, Dulsonia.

THE QUEEN. Oh, she is. [*Walks up and down.*] Mor worthy of admiration, has a more graceful carriage, a sweete voice, prettier hair, lovelier— [*Turns toward him.*] Well, must say you've observed her very carefully. Very. Ol Perhaps you're [*cruelly*] in love with her.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Oh. [*In his pain he has come forward turning left.* GET-A-QUICK *opens the door, left.* The QUEE *has walked rear right, and the throne hides her from* GET-A QUICK.]

GET-A-QUICK [*very sweetly*]. See, Henry, I have brough you these flowers from the wayside.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*warning her, running left, in terror*] Get-a-Quick! [GET-A-QUICK *bewildered as the* QUEEN *come forward, right.* GET-A-QUICK *curtsies and holds up her bunc of flowers.*] Your Majesty. [*The* QUEEN *looks at her coldly studying her.* GET-A-QUICK *is growing nervous.*] I did no see you. . . . My mother says your pills are—

THE QUEEN [*in a calm-before-the-stormish manner*]. Yes he's right. You're a good, yes, a sweet girl. [*To* PRINC HENRY-FLORIZEL, *with mounting, ramping anger.*] But *you* you false—

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*alarmed*]. Be careful, you're losing it.

THE QUEEN. Pretending to serve me and— [*She chokes.* And—playing the harp for *her*. Singing—for her. [PRINC HENRY-FLORIZEL *comes nearer, trying to stop her.*] Dustin the steps of my throne for *her*—to save *her*. [*In a tone o terrible rage, lifting her sceptre high over her head.*] Oh—I— I—

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*warning in agony*]. Dulso—

THE QUEEN. I—*hate* you. [*She throws the sceptre at him But it does not hit him, for he steps aside just in time.*]

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*quietly*]. You have lost it. [*Th* QUEEN *looks up frightened and watches him, as he move quietly right, his head bowed. At the door he turns and face her, sadly, proudly.*] You will never be happy until you fin it. [*He goes out, his hand on his heart, his head bent, sa sad; the* QUEEN *looking after him, her hands stretched ou*

She realizes he is gone. She sits as if stunned, rigid, on the lowest step of her throne.]

GET-A-QUICK [*so troubled and kind, as she comes to the* QUEEN *with the sceptre*]. What [*starting to place sceptre on the* QUEEN'S *lap*] have you lost?

THE QUEEN [*about to burst into tears, unconsciously pushing the sceptre aside*]. My—my— [*she bursts*] dignity. [GET-A-QUICK, *the* QUEEN'S *sceptre in her left arm, kneels and puts her arms about her, murmuring comforting cooey things like—"O dear, you poor dear," as*

[THE CURTAIN CLOSES.]

SCENE 2. *The interior of a peasant's hut. Centre-rear is the door opening into out-of-doors. Right is a cold hearth, a pot hangs on the crane; in front of it a table with two bowls and two chairs. Left is a box bed. It is very late afternoon, the light beginning to die golden. As the curtain parts,* PROMENONE *opens the door with much pomp, his walking-stick held high like a mace.*

PROMENONE [*in a loud voice, as if a herald*]. Know all! Dulsonia, the most gracious queen of— [*He feels, then sees that the room is empty.*] Oh. [*He feels outraged. He speaks out.*] Your Majesty, the peasant's hut is empty. [*Enter the* QUEEN *briskly, behind her* GET-A-QUICK.]

THE QUEEN. Very annoying. Very. [*She looks around curiously.*] Nothing ready. No throne. No. [*She sees the pot.*] They should be home cooking their supper. I'm disple—

GET-A-QUICK [*running left to look in the pot*]. Perhaps they haven't any, Your Maj—

THE QUEEN [*surprised, never having heard this before*]. Haven't an—

GET-A-QUICK [*peering in*]. Yes, a little. I'll light the fire and start it up.

PROMENONE. Perhaps they are still in the fields, working.

THE QUEEN. Working now, and the sun setting!—Well, go get them.

PROMENONE. Yes, Your Majesty. Won't you ascend the—the chair first? Perhaps I could hum the march for you. I—

THE QUEEN. Promenone, you talk too much.

PROMENONE [*bowing*]. Just as you say, Your Majesty. [*He exits, quietly humming the march and keeping in step himself with obstinate accuracy and exaggeration. The* QUEEN *looks at the chair, at* GET-A-QUICK. GET-A-QUICK *has seated herself and is looking at the fire.*]

THE QUEEN [*looking at her and the chair pointedly*]. The Queen wishes— [GET-A-QUICK *springs to her feet and sings* PROMENONE'S *last note loud and nervous. As she seats herself.*] This is very unusual. Promenone should have made all the arrangements.

GET-A-QUICK [*smoothing out the spread of the* QUEEN'S *gown*]. But you were in such a hurry, Dulsonia dear. Besides, all that he promised—he was very particular about that— [*Seating herself.*] All that he promised was to take you to a peasant's hut, where he had heard— Remember, Dulsonia, he had only heard it. He said he knew nothing about it himself. He had *heard* that dignity was often found [*pointing*] in the peasant's hut.

THE QUEEN. Oh, he hears many things. Too many, it seems to me.

GET-A-QUICK [*quickly*]. It was really clever the way he looked up the archives and found the name of your poorest peasant.

THE QUEEN. There shouldn't be a poor peasant in my realm.

GET-A-QUICK. There isn't, dear. But there's got to be a poor*est* peasant, hasn't there?

THE QUEEN. I suppose so—as long as there's more than one.

GET-A-QUICK [*gently, but firmly*]. More than two, dear. Poor (one), poorer (two), poorest—

THE QUEEN. Oh, all right. . . . Where do you suppose—Henry has gone?

GET-A-QUICK. I saw him a moment alone and he—

THE QUEEN [*angry*]. Alone. [*Remembering to control her bad temper*]. Oh. [*Brokenly.*] Now I know that he loves you more than—

GET-A-QUICK [*very sadly*]. Oh, no. He can never love me. He is a prince.

THE QUEEN [*not understanding*]. A prince?

GET-A-QUICK [*alarmed and confused*]. Among men. A prince among men, I mean. He told me that, among other things.

THE QUEEN. It seems to me he told you—

GET-A-QUICK. Oh, please don't interrupt, darling. I have a headache. I mean when I saw him alone he said he supposed he was banished.

THE QUEEN [*haughtily*]. Of course he's banished.

GET-A-QUICK. That's what he said. And that he'd have to go back anyway to his father's realm.

THE QUEEN [*sarcastic*]. Realm.

GET-A-QUICK [*terribly muddled and growing angry*]. Well, if he's a—prince among men, I suppose his father's a king among *old* men. Anyway, King Placido—

THE QUEEN [*getting irritated*]. What's King Placido got to do with Henry, my page. I suppose he told you that too when he was—

GET-A-QUICK. Yes. I mean, no. Oh, Dulsonia, don't—

THE QUEEN [*kindly, remembering*]. No, I won't. I'm losing my temper—again.

GET-A-QUICK. Promenone is slow.

THE QUEEN. As usual. But I think I hear—

GET-A-QUICK. Yes.

THE QUEEN. At last.

VOICE OF PROMENONE [*throwing open the door*]. No, you first. Then I. Court manners are different from other manners. Then kneel. [*The* PEASANT *and the* PEASANT'S WIFE *appear timidly at their door. They take a few steps directly*

forward, then, holding each other's hands, turn toward QUEEN, *and kneel very carefully and fearfully.* PROMENONE *enters, closing the door after him, and stands left rear.*]

THE QUEEN [*in a ceremonious cool tone*]. You may rise. [*They do, bobbing constantly.*] What were you doing?

THE PEASANT. We were sowing seeds, Your Majesty.

THE QUEEN. What with?

THE PEASANT. Just a hoe and one of our fingers. Like this.

THE QUEEN. Promenone, give these good people one of my patent quick-as-thought seed droppers.

PROMENONE. Yes, Your—

THE QUEEN. Where's your hoe?

THE PEASANT. We were so upset by your—so delighted by your—by the honor of your visit that we dropped it there in the field where we stood. [*The* PEASANT'S WIFE, *to help him, nods and smiles a deprecating smile to the* QUEEN *and back.*]

THE QUEEN [*severely*]. Very shiftless. It will rust. [*Changing to an anxious tone.*] But I came here to get something. [*The* PEASANT *and his* WIFE *look at each other in consternation. Irritably.*] Now wait a minute and don't— [*She controls herself.*] I've—I've lost something very valuable and I've come here to try to—to find it. No, not that kind of thing. It's my—much more valuable. [*The* PEASANT *and his* WIFE *look bewildered.*] My Councillor of State—that man—says he has heard that it's often found here. [*Looking around.*] In the peasant's hut.

THE PEASANT'S WIFE. But, Your Majesty, look. Look yourself. The place is bare. We have nothing, not even a spoon, except the two wooden— [QUEEN *puts her hand up in angry impatience, about to interrupt.*]

THE PEASANT [*taking his* WIFE'S *hand*]. My dear wife tells the truth, Your Dear Majesty. We are poor peasants, [*making it clearer*] the poor-but-honest kind. We would not steal a grain of corn from all Your Majesty's great bins. As for what you lost— [*firmly, with dignity*] we have it not.

THE QUEEN [*to* PROMENONE]. He seems honest, Promenone. It isn't—

PROMENONE [*hurt*]. You will find it here. The man who told me knows the peasant well; he is wise. It is here.

THE PEASANT'S WIFE [*in fright*]. Oh, oh, John.

THE PEASANT [*patting her shoulder*]. Now, now, Joan. It'll be all right. Will Your Majesty describe it to us? It may be here and we know it not.

THE QUEEN [*thinking; after a moment, helpless*]. It's—it's— [*Commanding.*] You describe it, Promenone.

PROMENONE [*flustered, fidgety, unhappy*]. Oh—I don't know anything about it—I'm afraid, Your—

THE QUEEN [*more kindly, to* GET-A-QUICK]. You describe it, Get-a-Quick.

GET-A-QUICK [*sweetly, but glad not to*]. Oh, I can't. I haven't much education, Dulsonia, and it is a very—hard, poetic subject.

THE QUEEN. Well, I'll try. I lost it. And Henry. . . . I think it's like somebody I know. Tall and slender, and has deep kind eyes and—it loves to serve.

PROMENONE [*repeating importantly, as if he were thinking*]. Kind eyes and it loves to serve.

THE PEASANT'S WIFE [*excited*]. Maybe it's an animal, John. It must be *some* animal. [*With dismay.*] It's Waggles.

THE PEASANTS [*they nod renunciation. Sadly.*] We thought we couldn't get along without Waggles, Your Majesty, but if you—

THE QUEEN [*coldly*]. Tall and slender and sings to a harp? Is that a dog? [*Very coldly.*] I was describing a man. [*Turning quickly, with a catch in her voice.*] Oh, Get-a-Quick, help me. I'm so lonesome. I want him—and—and *it* back.

GET-A-QUICK [*patting her hand*]. There, there.

THE PEASANT'S WIFE. Poor lady.

THE PEASANT. There's no man here, madam. You can search.

THE PEASANT'S WIFE. You can look under the bed.

PROMENONE. Under the bed, the Queen?

GET-A-QUICK [*To* QUEEN]. I'll try. [*To* PEASANT *and*

WIFE.] In a very sad moment, the Queen lost her—her sceptre, but it wasn't really that, but it's like a sceptre. And we were told, dear and kind sir, that we could find it here. [*Patting* QUEEN'S *hand.*] Now it's very difficult to describe. It's beautiful and—sort of sad. And you can't see it, not always, but you know when it's there.

THE PEASANT'S WIFE [*in fright*]. Glory be, John, it's a—

THE PEASANT [*patting her hand*]. We have no such thing, lady. We all die in our beds comfortable and healthy. There's no spooks, no sad ghosts in this family.

THE QUEEN. You're being impertinent. No one mentioned ghosts.

THE PEASANT [*annoyed*]. No one mentioned anything.

THE QUEEN. Why—

GET-A-QUICK [*kindly*]. Dulsonia. [*To* PEASANT.] We've *got* to find it. Soon. We need it.

THE PEASANT. Can't you name the thing, madam? Perhaps that might help.

GET-A-QUICK [*trying to save her, whispering it*]. She's lost—she's lost—her—

THE QUEEN [*almost in tears*]. Dignity. [*The* PEASANT *and his wife both look delighted.*]

THE PEASANT [*turning, pleased, to his* WIFE]. Why, Joan has it.

THE PEASANT'S WIFE [*smiling*]. No, John, *you* have it.

PROMENONE. There, what did I say!

THE QUEEN. Too much. They've both got it. Well, I want it—and quick.

THE PEASANT'S WIFE [*confused*]. But we—he—

THE PEASANT [*with great poise*]. She can't give it to you, lady, I mean Your Majesty. It's hers.

THE PEASANT'S WIFE [*not noticing the gender he used*]. Yes, his.

THE QUEEN [*like a rod speaking*]. I want it. [*Silence.*] I order it. [*Silence.*] I command you to—

THE PEASANT'S WIFE. Oh, oh, John.

THE PEASANT. There, there, Joan.

THE QUEEN. Don't you dare talk to each other in my presence. Will you, or will you not give it to me? You have confessed you have it. [*They start to protest.*]

PROMENONE. Shh.

THE QUEEN. Yes or no.

GET-A-QUICK [*unnoticed*]. Dulson—

THE PEASANT [*sadly, but firmly*]. We can't!

GET-A-QUICK. Oh, dear!

PROMENONE [*coming forward*]. The fourth cell, Your Majesty?

THE QUEEN. No, give them a cell apiece.

THE PEASANT'S WIFE. Oh, Your Majesty, let us be together.

GET-A-QUICK [*quietly*]. Dulsonia!

THE QUEEN. The fourth cell, together. [*The* QUEEN *turns her face from them.*]

PROMENONE. This way. [*At door, searching* PEASANT.] Any pistols?

THE PEASANT [*putting his arms up to assist him*]. Nothing.

PROMENONE [*patting his pocket*]. Any gold?

THE PEASANT. Nothing— [*Turning back to his wife.*] Except you, my dear. [*As she goes out first, happily.*] Pure gold.

PROMENONE. That's enough. [*They go out.*]

GET-A-QUICK. They've got it. [PROMENONE, *unnoticed, makes a ceremonious exit.* GET-A-QUICK *lights a candle.*]

THE QUEEN [*trying to wipe her eyes so that* GET-A-QUICK *will not notice she's been crying.*] Get-a-Quick, would you mind—mind putting me to bed? I'm so exhausted.

GET-A-QUICK. Have some porridge, dear.

THE QUEEN. No, no, don't ask me to eat. [*Goes over to bed.*] Besides, they might need it when they come back.

GET-A-QUICK [*happy*]. Oh, then you're going to let them—

THE QUEEN [*confused and helpless; seating herself*]. I don't know. [*Dropping her head down into her hands.*] Oh, why did I lose it! O Henry, Henry! [*She throws herself in exhaustion and sorrow on the bed.*]

GET-A-QUICK. You'll feel better in the morning. Perhaps we'll have a bright idea then and start out to the right place. [*Kneeling, she kisses the* QUEEN's *hand.*] Good-night, Your Majesty. [*She walks right and with a sigh seats herself on one of the hard chairs. After a moment she rests her head on a hand and begins to nod. The* QUEEN *sits up and looks at her.*]

THE QUEEN [*softly*]. Get-a-Quick— [GET-A-QUICK *jerks to her feet.*]

GET-A-QUICK. Yes, Your Majesty. Your lemonade?

THE QUEEN. Aren't you tired, dear?

GET-A-QUICK. Yes, a little, Your Majesty.

THE QUEEN [*moving over*]. Well, you just come right here into bed with me.

GET-A-QUICK. O Dulsonia, how kind. [*She runs over.*]

THE QUEEN [*excited*]. Do you think being kind will help? Being kind because you want to, not because you're just a queen? [GET-A-QUICK, *who has sat on the bed, gapes and blinks and tries to remember her mind so she can answer.*] Oh, never mind, dear. We'll talk things over in the morning. [GET-A-QUICK *puts her feet into bed. A moment's silence. Then sadly and longingly speaks the* QUEEN.] O Henry! My noble Henry. [*After a moment there is a snore from the nose of* GET-A-QUICK. *The* QUEEN *sits up in rage and begins.*] Get-a—

GET-A-QUICK [*sitting up, with her eyes closed*]. Yes, Your Majesty?

THE QUEEN. Nothing, dear. Lie down. [*She does.*] Are you comfortable? [*There's no answer. The* QUEEN *sighing, lies down. And then, after six seconds comes another snore. Patient and aristocratic, and very lonely.*] O Henry!

[CURTAIN.]

SCENE 3. *Near the frontier of Vita-Mora. Right, front, is a large beautiful tree; the grass about the trunk forms a beautiful hummock. From behind the tree and passing forward, centre, and back, left, and disappearing, runs the broad brown road of Vita-Mora. One sees a distant view of a castle, the castle of Amor-Vitens. Right of centre is a pile of stones. The* ROAD-MENDER *is at work. He is a blond young man, with a good high color and a robust constitution. His eyes are blue and very pleasant. He is a happy man. He is pounding the stones into place. As the curtain opens, he sings.*

ROAD-MENDER.

Pounding, pounding,
Mine is the joyous life!

[*Left enters* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL. *Over his king's costume he has a black mantle held tight about him; the hood of his cloak is pointed like a magician's cap. All of his face you can see is a very false beard. He listens to the* ROAD-MENDER.]

I'm working for Queen Dulsonia
And—

[HENRY-FLORIZEL *coughs. In a gay voice.*] Good morning, old father.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*trying to make his voice old*]. Good morning, my son. You seem to be very happy.

ROAD-MENDER. And why not? [*Giving a pound and singing.*]

Mine is a joyous life.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Have you been working here all morning, my son?

ROAD-MENDER. Since 6 A.M. [*Singing.*]

Working, pounding.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Have you—have you seen my—the Queen, Dulsonia, on this road?

ROAD-MENDER [*stopping in surprise*]. The Queen, here,

now! She is in the castle, of course, practicing on her harp Or listening to her page, Henry, rendering a selection. [*With pride.*] One of her compositions, of course.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. No. She is not. Word came to Amor Vitens—[*pointing to castle*]—I came from there—that the Queen had left the castle yesterday and had gone to the hut of the peasants, John and Joan. I arrived there at six this morning to find the hut empty. But one of my trusty messengers—I mean, a man I happened to meet told me they were walking through the woods this way.

ROAD-MENDER. This way. My goodness! [*Straightening his hat and brushing off his knees.*] What for?

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*sadly*]. She is on a search for her lost— My poor dear Dul—

ROAD-MENDER. *Your* poor dear! You talk like a prince or a king. It seems to me you're pretty familiar. And you seem to know a lot about her. May I ask who you may be Mr.—Stranger from Amor-Vitens?

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*confused*]. I'm—I'm a friend of the Queen's. I'm trying to help.

ROAD-MENDER. Oh, you are. Well, we don't need any help from Amor-Vitens, thank you. [*Leaning on his mallet, in suspicion.*] And it seems to me [*going up to him*] your voice is very young, in spots. You're [*looking close into his cap*] in disguise.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Yes—but—

ROAD-MENDER. I don't like it. You may be a spy, a foreign spy. I—

HENRY-FLORIZEL. No, trust me. I'm—one of Dulsonia's lovers.

ROAD-MENDER. With that beard! Oh, but that's not your —I don't like it. Say, how did you pass the guard at the frontier? I think I'll have him to look you over. [*Turning left rear, he puts a hand up to his mouth, as if about to halloo.*

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*in a tone of command*]. Don't. [*The* ROAD-MENDER *stops, aghast and surprised.* HENRY-FLORIZEL *steps up to him, hurriedly.*] I'm— [*He whispers in his ear.*

ROAD-MENDER [*looks at castle and then at* PRINCE *and then falls on one knee*]. Your Majesty. [*Then remembering and looking up in doubt.*] But your father—

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Rise. . . . King Placido retired to his monastery as soon as I got home yesterday and I am to be proclaimed king as soon as—as soon as I want to. But that will not be until I have won Dulsonia as my wife.

ROAD-MENDER [*leaning forward portentously*]. Beware of Henry, the page.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*smiling in his beard*]. Henry, the page? [*Looking up eagerly*]. Does she—seem to—like him? You know, that way.

ROAD-MENDER. I'm afraid so, Your Majesty. My lady-friend, Get-a-Quick—

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Do you know Get-a-Quick? [*Smiling, pleased.*] Dear little Get-a—

ROAD-MENDER [*suspicious, angry*]. Do *you?*

HENRY-FLORIZEL. I think so. [*Putting his hand on the restive* ROAD-MENDER.] Don't lose your— Was she tall and bony with a large nose and stiff curls always hanging the wrong way?

ROAD-MENDER [*laughing in scorn*]. Get-a-Quick! My pretty Get-a-Quick.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*pretending to remember*]. Slug—Slug—Slug-a-bed. That was it. The Countess Slug-a-bed. But I did meet—was she very pretty? [ROAD-MENDER *grins seraphically.*] What did she say about—Dulsonia and the page?

ROAD-MENDER. Get-a-Quick said—

HENRY-FLORIZEL. When?

ROAD-MENDER. Yesterday. I met her on the way back from her vacation to see her sick mother.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Yes—

ROAD-MENDER [*sullenly*]. Maybe she was only trying to tease me.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. I am sure of it! But go on. She said that—

ROAD-MENDER. She said if Henry, the page, hadn't been fathoms deep in love with her—

HENRY-FLORIZEL. With Dulso—

ROAD-MENDER [*angry*]. No, with her, Get-a-Quick, he could have had Dulsonia for the asking.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*dumfounded and excited*]. Henry—for the asking.

ROAD-MENDER [*nodding with finality*]. For the asking. The Queen dreams about him nights.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*shouting, almost like a* ROAD-MENDER, *for joy*]. Dreams about m— [*He runs up to the* ROAD-MENDER *and embraces him.*] Oh, Hubble, Hubble, Hubble!!

ROAD-MENDER [*protesting*]. Your Majesty.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*pointing to himself as if he were a turn in the road*]. I am—the page, Henry-Florizel.

ROAD-MENDER [*seeing all, in surprise*]. —the Wise.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*modestly making a joke*]. In disguise.

ROAD-MENDER [*thinking it out, getting the point*]. Why, that's a joke. You're in disguise both ways. This cloak, and—

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*smiling, proud of it*]. And beard—

ROAD-MENDER [*nodding*]. Makes you look like an old man and you're a young man. And this name, Prince Henry-Florizel— [*He hesitates.*]

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*helping and teasing him*]. The Wise—

ROAD-MENDER. Makes you sound like a wise man and you're a— [*He looks a bit frightened.*]

HENRY-FLORIZEL. A foolish man. Ha, ha! Like you Hubble— [*The* ROAD-MENDER *bursts out into a peal of manly laughter, followed by the royal shouts of* PRINCE HENRY FLORIZEL. *As they stop a moment gasping for breath, in the pause of their silence the frightened voice of* GET-A-QUICK *can be heard, off stage right.*]

GET-A-QUICK [*off stage*]. Oh, Dulsonia, I am frightened. Are they men or beasts?

THE QUEEN [*off stage*]. Be not afraid, dear Get-a-Quick, I will protect you. Oh, but my feet are weary.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*suddenly rigid with delight*]. They?

ROAD-MENDER [*nodding with heavy pleasure*]. Them.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Ssh! Not a word. [*Pointing to his disguise.*] I'll hide behind this tree. [*He stands, accurately, behind the part of the tree, facing the approaching pair. Speaking melodramatically back to the* ROAD-MENDER.] Silence. [*The* ROAD-MENDER *nods rapidly and nervously. He begins his work.*]

ROAD-MENDER [*singing*].

Pounding! Pounding!
Mine is the joyous life.

[*The* QUEEN *appears holding the hand of* GET-A-QUICK, *who is a step or two behind her.*]

I love the road I'm mending
Better than man or wife.

[GET-A-QUICK *steps ahead of the* QUEEN, *peering at the man, and nods her head in recognition.* ROAD-MENDER, *knowing she is looking at him, sings a little more rapidly, and nervously.*]

Pounding, beating,
I'm pounding with all my heart.
I'm not a shirk, I love my work,
Ho!

[*This is a terrible pound and takes three beats.*]

Mending a road's an art.

[*He repeats, more nervously.*]

Pounding! Pounding!
Mine is the joyous life.

GET-A-QUICK [*to* QUEEN, *very superiorly*]. Yes, that's the man I was telling you about.

ROAD-MENDER [*very off-handedly*]. Oh, is that you, Get-a-Quick? [*Singing and pounding.*]

I love the road I'm mending
Better than man or wife.

GET-A-QUICK [*very severely*]. Hubble, the Queen!

ROAD-MENDER [*kneeling on the road, suddenly*]. Your Majesty, I—

THE QUEEN [*very kindly*]. So this is Hubble. Arise,

Hubble, young man. [*To* GET-A-QUICK, *in a tired, nervou tone.*] Oh, my royal feet ache so. I *must* sit down. [*Look ing around, sees hummock under tree.*] Here's a throne [PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *dodges, so as not to be seen. A* QUEEN *starts forward,* GET-A-QUICK *tries to hum the openin bars of the royal march.*] Oh, don't bother about that. No now. [PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *watches her, though dodg ing, with loving eyes.*] I couldn't keep step to a—to a trom bone, my feet are so weary. [PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *give a loving sigh of sympathy. Starting, looking toward the tree.* What's that? [*Turning to* GET-A-QUICK.] It sounded like— [*As they interchange glances of wonder and questioning* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *gesticulates madly to the* ROAD MENDER *to save him.*]

ROAD-MENDER [*coughing*]. It was me, lady. I did that.

GET-A-QUICK [*not quite sure what has happened, but get ting* ROAD-MENDER'S *imploring glance to back him up*] Hubble is very sympathetic.

THE QUEEN [*disappointed*]. Oh. Very. [*As she seats her self.*] Umhah, that feels good. I've never walked so far i my life, Get-a-Quick.

GET-A-QUICK. Nor ever will again, I hope, Your Majesty

THE QUEEN [*sadly*]. That depends. I've got to find i Let's speak to this young man.

ROAD-MENDER [*who has been listening, becomes very self conscious and starts to pound again*].

Pounding! Working!
Mine is the joyous life.

GET-A-QUICK [*coquettishly*]. Good morning, Hubble.

ROAD-MENDER. Good morning. [*Touching his cap.*] It a long time since I've seen you.

GET-A-QUICK. Oh, no. Not quite twenty-four hours.

ROAD-MENDER [*hand on heart*]. That seems—

GET-A-QUICK [*very businesslike*]. No, you're not to mak love to me now. You're to talk to the Queen. She's in muc trouble and I told her I thought you had it, that is, I kne you could help her find—

ROAD-MENDER. Me, help a queen! [*Then proudly.*] Of course I can help her with the roads. Anything wrong about the roads around the palace, Your Majesty?

THE QUEEN. No, it isn't that. I want you to tell me about the—dignity of labor.

ROAD-MENDER. Ehh? What's that?

THE QUEEN [*confused*]. Well, I don't know really. I just read about it, once. [*Happily.*] In a very large book. So it must be so. So this morning, in the peasant's hut, I told Get-a-Quick about it, and she said we'd better come see you. She thought you might have it. And so here we are—after a very long walk.

ROAD-MENDER [*very decided, but not understanding*]. I ain't seen it anywhere, lady.

THE QUEEN. No—you can't exactly see it. That is, not the way you can see a cat or a dog or a—a page. But others can see it and—I want it. I must have it.

ROAD-MENDER. I'll do what I can to help you, or Get-a-Quick, lady.

THE QUEEN. Then tell me, tell us, how you feel about this labor—[*as he looks blank*]—this work, this mending the road every day.

ROAD-MENDER. Oh, how do I like my job. Oh, it's all right.

THE QUEEN. Is it hard?

ROAD-MENDER. You ought to try it. [*Wipes off his brow with a sweep.*] Whoopp. [*Hurriedly, as the* QUEEN *shows distaste.*] I didn't mean no disrespect, Queen, no—

GET-A-QUICK [*nervously*]. Your Majesty. He's very, very loyal, dear.

THE QUEEN [*smiling forgiveness*]. Are—are the hours long?

ROAD-MENDER [*humorously*]. As long as the light lasts. And the days are getting longer every night, till June 21, Your Majesty.

THE QUEEN. Well, why do you like it? Why are you so dignified about it?

ROAD-MENDER [*uncomfortably*]. Oh, I wouldn't say I was that.

THE QUEEN [*appealing*]. Oh, don't put me off. And don't be modest. I want to know. I need to. Oh, why isn't Henry here, to help! [*Her royal lower lip trembling.*] Excuse me but I must cry. [*As she lowers her head into her arms,* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *takes a step from behind the tree, making a gesture of love and protection toward the* QUEEN, *and then with soulful eyes blows her a soulful kiss.* GET-A-QUICK, *astounded, steps behind the* QUEEN *to protect her, recognizes him, takes a step back in surprise, then falls to one knee and on the hem of* DULSONIA'S *dress. As the* QUEEN, *surprised, jerks her head up from her hands,* HENRY-FLORIZEL *gracefully but very rapidly withdraws behind the tree, putting his finger to his lips to caution* GET-A-QUICK.]

THE QUEEN. You careless— [*Controlling herself and pulling free her dress.*] How did it happen, Get-a-Quick?

GET-A-QUICK. I—I slipped on a root. My knees are very nervous. We walked so far this morning, five miles or even mor—

THE QUEEN. Get-a-Quick, sit right here at my feet. That looks soft. I'm a selfish woman.

GET-A-QUICK [*kissing her garment's hem*]. Oh, no.

ROAD-MENDER. No, indeed, ma'am. You're—

GET-A-QUICK. Now, Hubble, don't talk, but tell the Queen about the dignity of—why you like to be a road-mender.

THE QUEEN. Please.

ROAD-MENDER. Well, it's this way. Every man's got to work. And every child too, though his work's mostly play. If you don't work you eat y'r heart out, and that ain't comfortable.

THE QUEEN. No.

ROAD-MENDER [*agreeing*]. Yes'm. Well. Now I just naturally like to pound things—so I thought I'd be a road mender.

THE QUEEN. And I'm very glad you did. But what makes you a good road-mender? I think, I'm not sure, that's what

gives you dignity, being a good road-mender or a *good* queen.

ROAD-MENDER [*grinning*]. Me, a queen?

GET-A-QUICK. No, stupid. She was thinking of somebody else. [*Deciding to be kind.*] Now tell the Queen, dear Hubble, [*he looks up delighted*] why you mend the roads, square and neat and—and slick, so they'll last. Won't you, Hubble dear?

ROAD-MENDER [*taking a step forward eagerly*]. Why—why—Get-a-Quick.

GET-A-QUICK. Tell the Queen, dear.

ROAD-MENDER [*his face all smiles and enthusiasm*]. Why, Your Majesty, a man's got to do the best he can. Besides, this road is important. It's got to be strong *and* smooth or—well, it's just got to be. If it wasn't, everybody would be put out. You see, it serves [*at this word the* QUEEN *starts a little and* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *puts his head out and smiles, comforting*] the whole neighborhood. Moon couldn't bring his milk along in the morning if the road was all cut up. How could we deliver the fire-wood for the cold winter? How could Your Majesty's postman take letters—some of them love-letters—all over the realm and across the border to Amor-Vitens? How could noble visitors come from Amor-Vitens to Vita-Mora?

THE QUEEN. Or pages.

ROAD-MENDER. Or pages. Don't you see? This road is your servant and—[*putting his free hand in his bosom*]—the servant of the people. [GET-A-QUICK *smiles approval.*] Why, I've *got* to make it good. [*Thinking and getting the thought brightly.*] I've got to serve *it.* [*The* QUEEN *is bending over keenly.*]

THE QUEEN [*gravely*]. Yes, you've got it.

GET-A-QUICK [*tenderly*]. Hubble has it.

THE QUEEN [*looking down sharply and kindly*]. You—you respect Hubble deeply, don't you? [GET-A-QUICK *blushes.*] *Very* deeply. [PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *is signaling wildly to the* ROAD-MENDER *to leave the premises, but he*

is not seen. The ROAD-MENDER *is gazing, his hand on his heart, at* GET-A-QUICK.] Don't you?

GET-A-QUICK [*scarcely audibly*]. Yes, Your Majesty.

THE QUEEN. And you, Hubble. But I can see from your hand how you feel. [*She sighs.*] I must do it. [*To* GET-A-QUICK.] Go take a walk with Hubble.

GET-A-QUICK. And leave you alone? [PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *is still gesticulating madly.*] Never.

THE QUEEN [*very royally*]. I command. [GET-A-QUICK *kneels her thanks.*] Take ten minutes— No, all the time you want. [*Looking around nervously.*] I think I'm safe.

GET-A-QUICK [*as she sees* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *signaling protection and impatience at the slow withdrawal of* GET-A-QUICK *and* HUBBLE]. Yes, Your Majesty, perfectly. [*Kneeling, to both at once.* ROAD-MENDER *pulls his hat, to both.* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *answers by gesticulating him away, with command. Tripping left to* ROAD-MENDER, *looking up sweetly.*] *Dear* Hubble.

ROAD-MENDER [*putting his left arm about* GET-A-QUICK]. Dear, dear Get-a-Quick. [*He swings his mallet in his right hand.*]

Mine is a joyous life.

[GET-A-QUICK *puts her arm about him and they go out very lovingly. The* QUEEN, *raising her head, sighs lonesomely. At this moment,* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL, *giving a weak, old cough, appears from behind the tree and walks, with very shaking old steps, left.*]

THE QUEEN [*to herself*]. Oh, who will help me now? [PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *coughs again.*] Poor old man. Wait a minute, I'll come to help you.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*quickly, in a very ancient voice*]. Oh no, don't come near me. I have a *very* bad cold. [*He coughs terribly.*] See? You might catch it. [*He coughs once again firmly.*] There, I feel better. I had to get that cough out of my throat. Now I feel quite strong. Perhaps there's something I can do for you, Your Majesty.

THE QUEEN. Yes. You look very wise. I need wisdom. Are you *sure* you feel strong enough to stand before me.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*in a happy, younger tone*]. I feel—like a young man—almost—you're so kind, and *good*.

THE QUEEN [*sadly*]. Your voice reminds me of some one, faintly.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*in a much older tone*]. Oh, my voice is very unsteady. I'm just entering *second* childhood, you know, and sometimes it cracks back again to the old one, the first one. Don't think about it. Now what can I, an old man, do for you?

THE QUEEN [*with quiet despair*]. I—I've lost my dignity.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Tht—tht. Oh—now, now that's too bad. That's very serious. But perhaps—

THE QUEEN. Everybody seems to have it except myself. And they can't give it to me. And I can't make them, even if I am a queen.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*like a lover*]. But are you sure you haven't got it?

THE QUEEN [*looking away*]. That voice—

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*quickly, and very old*]. But of course—[*Hitting his head.*] Ancient old fool. You said you'd lost it, terribly. But, my dear, you can win it back, if you haven't already, by serving others.

THE QUEEN [*without hope*]. Who could I serve?

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*doubtfully*]. Well, there's Promenone.

THE QUEEN. That silly old fool. I don't mean to be impolite.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. He's not such a fool as you think. His manners are silly, that's all. If you had—and perhaps you have now—kind eyes, you could see how lovingly he serves you. And how wisely.

THE QUEEN. And there's Get-a-Quick.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Yes, dear Get-a-Quick.

THE QUEEN. But she doesn't need me now. She's got Hubble.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. You try. [*Kindly.*] And there's John and Joan.

THE QUEEN. I forgot all about them. Poor old things. . . . And there's old Slug-a-Bed. And Count Spic-a-dandy. I *know* he's an idiot—but I might try. And—

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*very sadly*]. Henry, the page.

THE QUEEN [*bursting into tears*]. Oh—Henry!—Oh, I hurt— [*Suddenly, trying to excuse herself.*] Though I didn't hit him—my Henry, my love, my only love. [PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL *puts his hand on heart with joy, raises—and wriggles—his beard as he smiles at the sky and takes a skip or two. Then controlling himself, speaks very gravely.*]

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Poor Henry.

THE QUEEN [*through her sobs*]. I can never, never serve him. He has left—Vita-Mora—forever.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. You can send a courier after him.

THE QUEEN. He won't come. I—I—threw my sceptre at him.

PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL. You try him. Perhaps, if you apologize, he would forgive you.

THE QUEEN [*shaking her head violently*]. No. I *can't* apologize. That's one thing I can't do.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*gently*]. It would be very dignified of you.

THE QUEEN. Dignified to apologize?

HENRY-FLORIZEL. If you mean it.

THE QUEEN. I do. But I can't.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Then you don't.

THE QUEEN [*getting angry*]. I say I do, you.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. I must leave you.

THE QUEEN. Oh, don't— Help me.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*thoughtfully*]. Do you want to *see* better, with the eyes of love? [*As she waits.*] That will help you to serve better. That will bring you back your—*it*.

THE QUEEN. Yes—I want it. I—

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*speaking like a magician and raising his arms*]. Truly? [*She nods, half excited, half sleepy.*] Really?

Spinly, speely—
Eyes of love and service, sooooo.
[*Her head droops and her eyes close.*]
Dig-ni—Wig-ni
Fied and
[*He places a sweet kiss on her sleeping brow.*]
pretty
[*The light is fading.*]
Eyes of love and service, tooo.
[*The light has faded. The curtain is closing. He makes a pass.*]
Open eyes, and truly—dooo.

[THE CURTAIN HAS CLOSED.]

SCENE 4. *The scene is the same as the last one. The darkness which had almost fallen black at the close of the last has fallen now, but a strange moony light, pale green with pearly tints of rose, gradually grows and picks out several objects: first, the* QUEEN'S *glittering crown; then the white road. The light fills the woods.* QUEEN DULSONIA *is sitting at the foot of the tree as before, but the light which picks out the mica in the earth at the foot of the tree and throws nice pearly tones over everything, makes it look like a real throne. Her eyes are opening.*

THE QUEEN [*closing and opening them rapidly, several times*]. Yes. [*So happy—glad.*] I *can* see better. Why—I never saw before. Everything is perfectly, and—[*looking carefully*]—proudly exquisite. Why, even— [*She hears a humming, left.*] Why, what's that? [*Enter* PROMENONE, *humming the royal march for himself; he walks with the same silly pomp. But, carefully fixed to the back of his neck, by a nice strong rod, is a halo.*] It's dear Promenone. [*Very kindly.*] Good-morning, Promenone.

PROMENONE [*bowing*]. It's late afternoon, Your Majesty, by the court clock. There isn't any time here.

THE QUEEN. Isn't there? Oh, thank you. What's that thing on your head?

PROMENONE. It isn't on my head; it's over my head. It's —uncomfortable. I didn't put it there. I just felt it there when I started to come into this moony wood. But I didn't want to stop to take it off because I was afraid I might keep Your Majesty waiting.

THE QUEEN. How kind of you, my dear Promenone. But what is it? What is it called?

PROMENONE [*still a bit shamefaced*]. It's a halo. Saints usually have them.

THE QUEEN. Well, it is very becoming to you. And you certainly deserve to have it. How long have you been serving me, Promenone?

PROMENONE. How long have you been living, Your Majesty? I have served you since you first drew breath, in the palace.

THE QUEEN [*delighted, and clapping her hands*]. You've got it!

PROMENONE [*alarmed*]. Got it! Got what, Your Majesty?

THE QUEEN. Dignity.

PROMENONE. Oh, no.

THE QUEEN [*quickly, but not losing her temper*]. Yes, you have. The dignity of loyal service.

PROMENONE [*confused*]. But—

THE QUEEN. Never mind. You keep that on. At court too—I want every one to see it. . . . And I might forget. [*He hesitates.*] Yes, it's extremely becoming. It makes you quite handsome. Yes, very, very becoming.

PROMENONE. Is it, dear? Well, if you think it would add to the impressiveness of court ceremony, if you think I'd look better this way when you are ascending the throne, well, I'll wear it, though it is a little, just a little, uncomfortable, or rather—

THE QUEEN. Promenone, don't. You make me cry.

PROMENONE. Oh, Your Majesty, I—

THE QUEEN [*sniffing happily*]. You're so good to me. I—I thought you did all those foolish things, humming and bowing and everything—because you thought *you* were so—so important.

PROMENONE. Am I not your Councillor of State, my Queen? Besides, I enjoy it.

THE QUEEN [*impulsively*]. Promenone, what can I do for you? How can I serve you?

PROMENONE [*in horror*]. You serve me!

THE QUEEN. Yes. Isn't there something you've never had that you've always wanted? Think. Think.

PROMENONE [*after thinking gravely*]. You are most gracious—but, no. I am well supplied with the things of this—no, I mean the other, life.

THE QUEEN. Wouldn't you like just a little more land? Another farm or two? [PROMENONE *shakes his head.*] A Sunday halo?

PROMENONE. No, I'd better not. I think they're hard to put on and off. But Your Majesty is too—

THE QUEEN. Oh, Promenone, think. I've got to do something for you. If I don't, you dear old man, I'll never be happy again. Surely there's something you never had and always wanted.

PROMENONE. Never had and always wanted? [*After a moment, gravely.*] Yes, time to myself.

THE QUEEN. I don't understand.

PROMENONE. Your Majesty will excuse me if I—

THE QUEEN. Oh, do speak frankly.

PROMENONE. Your Majesty may or may not know that according to the present arrangements—I'm not criticizing them, I'm—

THE QUEEN [*in a commanding short tone*]. Go on! [*Quickly in a beseeching, kindly tone.*] Go on.

PROMENONE. According to our present arrangements, I am at Your Majesty's command at any time in the day or in the night you choose to call on me. Now—there's something I'm

very much interested in. I've always wanted an hour all my own, an hour when nobody could send for me and when I could do whatever I wanted to do. Not that I—

THE QUEEN [*in a shamed voice*]. It's yours. What hour—would you like?

PROMENONE [*quite excited*]. My dear, dear—do you really mean it?

THE QUEEN [*nodding*]. I never realized you didn't have it, you poor old-ish thing.

PROMENONE [*washing his hands with delight*]. Well—well—well. You'll have to wait a minute. I'm really quite excited. I—must choose carefully.—Let me see, let me see. . . . Nine to ten A.M.

THE QUEEN [*rising and saying it as if she were reading the constitution*]. You are free, Promenone—Alcibiades Promenone, Knight of the Blue Garter and the Pink Bow, Promoter of— [*Ashamed.*] I've forgotten.

PROMENONE. Never mind, never mind. From—

THE QUEEN. From nine A.M. till twelve noon.

PROMENONE [*flatly, but hoping*]. Oh, that is too much.

THE QUEEN [*curiously*]. What is it you want to do?

PROMENONE [*with great enthusiasm*]. Your Majesty, I collect stamps.

THE QUEEN. Stamps? Collect—

PROMENONE. You see, I've always done it since I was a boy. As Councillor of State, I arranged to have all the mail pass through my hands.

THE QUEEN. The mail?

PROMENONE. The letters, the packages, the diplomatic correspondence. And before they are delivered I remove the stamps I am in need of. It's all quite legal.

THE QUEEN. Would it help you if I opened up diplomatic correspondence with some new country?

PROMENONE. Oh, would you—could you open up correspondence with the independent island of Ferro Sauvage? I have never even seen one of their stamps.

THE QUEEN. Write the President that I should like to spend

my summer vacation on his island and to please answer immediately recommending five of the best four-room houses.

PROMENONE [*politely*]. Forty-room houses. The servants.

THE QUEEN. Four of the best forty-room houses for the Queen to choose from. That—[*pointing to halo, and almost giggling*]—ought to need a large room.

PROMENONE [*a little hurt*]. It isn't the size— [*They both smile.*] But what does that matter? Nine to twelve o'clock, noon. May I? Oh, may I run back to tell Lucinda?—the duchess, my wife, you know? She is almost as interested as I.

THE QUEEN. Yes, do go—dear Promenone. [*He bows and starts off, right, to the royal march; then stops and ejaculates with the unbelief of sudden joy.*]

PROMENONE. Well—well— [*He waddles off quickly, with a skip or two, the halo nodding above his head.*]

THE QUEEN [*looking after him*]. Dear old silly—kind— [*Off stage, left, is heard the thrilling laughter of* GET-A-QUICK. *She runs on swiftly, gracefully, curtsying.*]

GET-A-QUICK. Oh, Dulsonia, he loves me.

THE QUEEN. Hubble?

GET-A-QUICK. How did you know? He wants me to marry him, to-day.

THE QUEEN. But you can't do that. I need you—to take me home—to warm my—

GET-A-QUICK [*sadly, but patiently*]. That's what I told him.

THE QUEEN [*remembering, seeing*]. Get-a-Quick, you are very beautiful.

GET-A-QUICK. That's what he told me.

THE QUEEN [*sadly*]. You have dignity. And you serve me so kindly.

GET-A-QUICK. And I'll not desert you, Dulsonia. I'll not marry my handsome Hubble till you've found—[*dropping her voice considerately*]—*it* again.

THE QUEEN [*like a child, learning a lesson*]. I must think of you first. Get-a-Quick, do you love your handsome Hubble very much?

GET-A-QUICK. Oh, Your Majesty, I love him more than—more than [*seriously*] my own face in the mirror. I love him more than myself, more than [*fearfully*] you.

THE QUEEN. Of course. That's the way you should love him. But [*puzzled*] I thought you loved Henry once.

GET-A-QUICK. No—I was just dazzled. He was noble. Too noble.

THE QUEEN. He has beautiful eyes.

GET-A-QUICK. Yes, but Hubble's are more comforting. Not that I—

THE QUEEN. If it was not for your devotion to me, would you marry Hubble to-day?

GET-A-QUICK. Yes, Your Majesty.

THE QUEEN. Then you must marry him—I shall miss you—to-day. Of course it's almost night.

GET-A-QUICK. Oh! You'll let me!

THE QUEEN. But be sure to come right back, if you don't mind, dear, and warm my slippers. And don't forget my hot lemonade.

GET-A-QUICK. But, Dulsonia, if I marry Hubble, I'll have to keep house for him.

THE QUEEN. What's that?

GET-A-QUICK. You see, he has a little house, down there, near the frontier. And he's all alone—and—and—I love him very much—and—

THE QUEEN. You'll have to move the house—I've seen it done—up right next to the castle—under my bedroom window. I can't get along without you.

GET-A-QUICK. But it's a little house, of wood. It is almost a hut, but very nice, very clean, very—

THE QUEEN. I'll move down there.

GET-A-QUICK. Your Maj—

THE QUEEN. No, I've too many things—and servants. Something must be done. Think! Think!

GET-A-QUICK [*in a very small voice*]. I've always wanted to be a duchess.

THE QUEEN. Get-a-Quick, you're clever. That settles it.

You're the Duchess of Something-or-other and you can have a suite right next to mine.

GET-A-QUICK. But my husband—

THE QUEEN. What can he do?

GET-A-QUICK. He knows all about roads, inside and out.

THE QUEEN. He's—Secretary of Transportation. I'm sure we must need one.

GET-A-QUICK [*starting to kneel and prevented by the* QUEEN]. How—shall I—

THE QUEEN. Run off and tell Hubble. And get moved just as soon as you can. And I hope you'll be very happy. [GET-A-QUICK *hesitates.*] Oh, I'm all right. I'll get home somehow. [*As* GET-A-QUICK *runs out, left, waving her hand joyously.*] Oh, I'm so happy—[*sadly*]—*sort* of— [*Enter silently, right,* JOHN *and* JOAN *manacled together. They come forward, patient. The* QUEEN *sees them. In a voice of pain.*] Oh! . . . How could I! You poor old things. What *shall* I do! Tell me what to do.

THE PEASANT [*brightly to his wife*]. There, Joan. I told you there was some misunderstanding. Would you mind if we went right home? We're more used to things there.

THE QUEEN. Oh, do, do go. [*As they start to turn.*] But that—that —those [*pointing to manacles*] terrible things.

THE PEASANT. These? [*Holding them up.*] Oh, we haven't felt them at all, have we, mother?

THE PEASANT'S WIFE. Yes—I mean no. We knew there was some mistake, Your Majesty.

THE QUEEN [*in an agony of apprehension*]. But how'll you get them off?

THE PEASANT. We'll run over to Hubble's. Don't you worry. He'll chop them off. He has a lovely axe.

THE QUEEN. Oh, do tell him to be careful. He's a kind young man. [*They start again*]. But isn't there something else I can do for you, besides the reprieve? [*Happily.*] How would you like to be a duke and a duchess?

THE PEASANT [*in consternation*]. Me!

THE QUEEN. Yes, both of you. It's very easy.

THE PEASANT'S WIFE. I don't think I have the figure for it, lady. I haven't your dignity, ma'am.

THE QUEEN. My— What did you say?

THE PEASANT'S WIFE. Your dignity, ma'am.

THE QUEEN [*in a scared, small voice*]. Have I got it—back? My—

THE PEASANT'S WIFE. Speak up, John. Isn't she every inch a queen?

THE QUEEN. Oh, I don't care about being a queen. It's—

THE PEASANT'S WIFE. John!

THE PEASANT [*pleasantly*]. Well, mother, I don't think there's a queen in all the world with her looks, her—her—

THE QUEEN [*breathing it, imploring it*]. Dignity?

THE PEASANT. You said it, lady—you remind me of something, some one I've seen somewhere. Now what was it, mother?

THE PEASANT'S WIFE [*excited*]. It's that beautiful stained-up window in the throne room, the one to the right. We were there on your last birthday, Your Majesty. When you were sixteen; sweet sixteen.

THE PEASANT. That's it, mother. [*To* QUEEN.] You're like the good Queen Agatha.

THE QUEEN [*finishing, imploring*]. Dulsonia?

THE PEASANT [*nodding*]. Agatha-Dulsonia, the servant of her people. [*The* QUEEN *begins to cry softly, happily.*]

THE PEASANT'S WIFE. Come on, John, she's all upset. She doesn't want us. [*They tiptoe out, left.* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL, *in his king's costume and crown, comes out from behind the tree.*]

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Dulsonia, love. [*She stops abruptly. She looks up, her eyes opening wide with surprise. She says nothing.*] Do you know me, love?

THE QUEEN. Yes. You're Henry, the page. And I—want to apologize.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Oh, don't!—Yes, I think you'd better. It'll make you feel all cleaned up inside.

THE QUEEN [*very distinctly*]. Henry, I was a beastly old

cat, a nasty little shrew of a queen to throw my sceptre at you. And—and I wish you had thrown it back at me—

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*in delicate protest*]. My dear!

THE QUEEN. I deserve it. Can you forgive me, Henry? Do you?

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*very tenderly*]. Yes, I did, before the sceptre hit the floor. I understood. You are forgiven.

THE QUEEN. Thank you, Henry. And now what can I do, for you? [*With a brave sob.*] I want to *stay* dignified.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. You can look upon me. [*Acting again like a magician, and spinning a charm with his beautiful voice.*] With eyes of love.

THE QUEEN [*already charmed and sleepy*]. And service, too.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Dig-ni—wig-ni.

THE QUEEN [*very faint*]. Fied and pretty.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Close, dear eyes. [*She does close them.* HENRY-FLORIZEL, *without taking his eyes from the* QUEEN, *beckons left with one hand, still weaving the charm with the other.* PROMENONE *comes tripping back, jerky and gentle, his halo nodding.*] —To-morrow, too,— [GET-A-QUICK *and* HUBBLE, *arm in arm, trip high and light.*] Open eyes— [JOHN *and* JOAN, *each holding up half a manacle, come in, padding in a respectful manner. As* HENRY-FLORIZEL *says the last words these others sit very gently and quietly at the feet of the lovely* QUEEN, *to watch and tend her dignified sleeping.*] —and truly! Do! [HENRY-FLORIZEL *kneels, watching, loving.*]

[CURTAIN.]

SCENE 5: *The same as Scene 1.* GET-A-QUICK *is dusting the throne.* PROMENONE *is inspecting things.*]

PROMENONE. My, how we do miss that boy, Henry. He was the best servant we ever had.

GET-A-QUICK. Thank you, Promenone.

PROMENONE. You're pert. . . . And there's mud on your right shoe, *in* the throne room.

GET-A-QUICK. If you'll look carefully, you'll find mud on the shoes and the rubbers of the Queen, Dulsonia, of the realm of Vita—

PROMENONE [*astounded*]. Why, this is treason, lèse—

GET-A-QUICK [*dropping her duster behind the throne*]. Oh, no, it isn't that, Promenone. The Queen and I took a long walk yesterday and last night. We had to make a couple of calls. And we got home so late, this morning, no, noon, we just dropped into bed like—two peasants.

PROMENONE. The court thought you had been stolen, that is, the Queen. The royal realm of Vita-Mora was wild with anxiety. I left you two safe in the hut of John and Joan—What did you do—

GET-A-QUICK [*pirouetting*]. Oh, we were very well taken care of, by two gentlemen. [*She throws her arms around his old dignified neck and gives him a terrible hug.*] Oh, Promenone, you old duck, I'm so happy. I'm so— [*A shrill blast of trumpets right.* GET-A-QUICK *runs left of the throne,* PROMENONE *waddles right; both stand ready to receive the* QUEEN.]

THE QUEEN [*off stage, her voice kind*]. Now don't be nervous, Pfeiffer. You play very nicely. I'm sure there's not another royal trumpeter can compare with you. [*One of the men lets forth all his surprise in one excited note.*] That's all right. You were surprised. [*She stands at the door, smiling at* GET-A-QUICK.] I'm a bit surprised myself. [*She turns right.*] Countess Slug-a-Bed, that right curl is certainly beautiful. So straight and—and proper. Good-morning, Count Spic-a-dandy. Now don't fold your hands behind you. You have the most beautiful nails in all the realm, especially the left thumb. [*She turns, with a weary sigh, about to enter the throne room.*] Oh, I forgot. [*Turning right again.*] Is there anything I can do for you? Can I—serve you in any way? No? Well, if any of you should think of something you'd like, jot it down on a piece of paper and drop it in the box,

the question box. It's outside the Council-hall. Promenone, kindly tack up a box to-day, if you are not too busy. That's all. Thank you. You may go now. [*She bows court out, politely, but firmly. Giving an order.*] Now, Herr Pfeiffer. So kind of you, and your men, to wait. [*She turns ready to approach the throne. After a second the band, nervously and fortissimo and not all together, play the opening chords of the royal march.* GET-A-QUICK *giggles;* PROMENONE *looks aghast. At the proper note* DULSONIA *starts, but even for her it is at first difficult to keep in step, the rhythm being still slightly unrhythmic. Then the happy musicians play most beautifully and engagingly and Dulsonia, swept by the cordiality of the music, proceeds to her throne with grace, dignity, and a little smile that makes her walk as light as a dancer's. In the last bar or two, one of the most happy of the unseen musicians puts in one or two exquisite flourishes.*[1] *The* QUEEN *is, to perfect rhythm, finally seated. She smiles graciously at* PROMENONE *and* GET-A-QUICK.]

THE QUEEN [*to* GET-A-QUICK]. Tell them, dear, they never played it better and to be sure to play it just that way, flourishes and all, next time. And order some chocolate peppermints for them. A box each. [*Exit* GET-A-QUICK *right. To* PROMENONE, *who stands astounded.*] I suppose you're surprised, Promenone.

PROMENONE. Not surprised, but—well, I wasn't prepared for it. Not that your—

THE QUEEN. Haven't I been a little pig of a queen? No, you needn't answer. I have. [*Appealing.*] I haven't any father, Promenone, and you'll have to just make believe you're my father—[PROMENONE *moves right and left in his distress*] —for a moment. Promenone, I think I've found it.

PROMENONE. Found what, Your Majesty.

THE QUEEN. Don't you remember what I was looking for, at the peasant's hut?

PROMENONE [*bridling with pleasure*]. Oh, so it was there, as I said.

[1] You can put in the extra notes yourself. Dulsonia won't mind—*now.*

THE QUEEN. Well, no. That is, yes. I found it yesterday, in a vision.

PROMENONE [*attentive, but unenlightened*]. In a—

THE QUEEN [*smiling*]. No, that's not a box. It's something that happens to you. Something nice, usually. I was sitting at the foot of a tree—

PROMENONE. Your Majesty might have caught cold. Had I known it I would have protested.

THE QUEEN. You were there, too, Promenone.

PROMENONE. No. I—must contradict you. All day yesterday from nine till noon—no, midnight—in spite of my anxiety—I was casting up accounts. [*As* QUEEN *looks puzzled.*] Adding up—and subtracting down—your money. Don't be alarmed, you are very rich. And you were sitting at the foot of a tree!

THE QUEEN. And suddenly I saw things, and people, the way I had never seen them before. I saw you. Come a little closer. Bend your head. It isn't there now, is it, but I can see it. You dear old thing. Promenone, how would you like to collect stamps from nine to twelve every morning? [PROMENONE'S *jaw falls, mouth open. He speaks, after several seconds, in an agitated, hoarse voice.*]

PROMENONE. Collect stamps. How did you know?

THE QUEEN [*smiles*]. Something you said, once upon a time.

PROMENONE [*trying to remember*]. Was it my suggestion —the other day—that we open diplomatic correspondence, I mean relations with Ferro—

THE QUEEN [*smiling*]. Sauvage.

PROMENONE. I hope you don't think—

THE QUEEN. We'll open it up to-morrow, Promenone. Tell the President I want a four—no, a forty-room house where I can spend my vacation.

PROMENONE [*starting left*]. I'll go start it, I mean the correspondence now, if Your—

THE QUEEN [*stopping and teasing him*]. Oh, by the way, Promenone. Of course you take off all the stamps, I mean the

rare ones for the— [PROMENONE *looks confused.*] That's a very sensible idea. No use wasting good stamps, dear. It's perfectly legal.

PROMENONE [*forgetting to bow, starts to go again*]. I'll tell my wife, the Duchess. Nine to— [*At the door.*] Can I serve you in any other way, Your Majesty? The afternoons are long,—[*smiling*]—now that I—nine to twelve.

THE QUEEN. Noon. [*Trying to remember.*] Let me see. There was something else. Oh! Oh, how could I forget. [*Frightened.*] Oh, Promenone, you must help me. I don't want to lose it again.

PROMENONE [*coming a step forward in distress*]. My dear—

THE QUEEN [*remembering*]. John and Joan. I almost forgot to help, to serve, dear John and Joan. [*He starts to protest.*] They're innocent, Promenone. It was just my bad temper sent them to prison. Go free them. Get them my royal coach and tell them that I'm coming to call on them and that I'll bring them some milk—and hot lemonade, and slippers. Run, Promenone, oh, do run. [*He tries to, and collides with* GET-A-QUICK, *who is rushing in.*]

GET-A-QUICK. I'm sorry, Promenone, but you're *so* slow. [*She runs by him and kneels on the lowest step of the throne.* PROMENONE *exits left.*] Oh, Dulsonia, Hubble and—and a friend of his are waiting below.

THE QUEEN [*graciously*]. Tell them to come right up.

GET-A-QUICK [*consciously*]. Both of them—that is, Hubble is at the door now.

THE QUEEN. Come in, Hubble. [*Enter left the* ROAD-MENDER, *his mallet still in his hand. He comes over and in a very democratic but respectful way bows.*]

ROAD-MENDER. I suppose you understand, Your Majesty, why Get-a-Quick and I came back so late yesterday. We were very much engaged. In fact—

THE QUEEN. Yes, I'm surprised that you returned at all. I'm afraid I shouldn't, if—if— [*She droops her face sadly over her left shoulder.*]

GET-A-QUICK. Don't despair, Dulsonia. He may come soon—[*as* QUEEN *looks startled*]—er than you thought. Go on, Hubble.

ROAD-MENDER. As I was saying, I want to marry Get-a-Quick as soon as possible. That road of yours is all finished; I finished it this morning. And I think as soon as you can spare Get-a-Quick, we'll go off for a honeymoon. I have an invitation to visit Amor-Vitens. The king—that is, a friend of mine—

THE QUEEN. I'll miss you, Get-a-Quick. I don't see how I'll get along without you. [*They both look weepy.*] But I'll have to, of course. You'll have to keep house for him, of course, and serve him, if you love him. And I'll have to—excuse the lump in my throat—give you up, because—

GET-A-QUICK. Oh, no! Can't I—can't we have a room in the castle somewhere?

THE QUEEN [*remembering, cannily*]. Perhaps we—I think I can remember— Oh, how would you like to be the Duchess of Something-or-other and have a suite next to mine?

GET-A-QUICK [*overcome*]. Your Majesty!

THE QUEEN [*to* HUBBLE]. I suppose you'd rather tend to the roads than anything else?

ROAD-MENDER. It's the work I can do best, ma'am, Your Majesty.

THE QUEEN. I hereby, herewith and right here make you Minister of Transportation.

ROAD-MENDER [*half protesting*]. Oh, no.

THE QUEEN. You'll find it easy when you get used to it. It's nice to run things.

ROAD-MENDER. I think I'd rather remain a—

THE QUEEN [*imploring*]. Oh, do try it, Hubble, there's a dear. [*As he still hesitates.*] Just to please me. [*He looks toward* GET-A-QUICK, *who nods yes, decidedly.*]

ROAD-MENDER. Well—all right. I'll take it for a week, Your Majesty.

THE QUEEN. Oh, thank you. Is there anything else I can do?

ROAD-MENDER [*winking at* GET-A-QUICK, *so the* QUEEN *doesn't see*]. Well, I have an old friend with me. An old, old man—

THE QUEEN. Poor thing!

ROAD-MENDER. No, he's not at all poor. Just came into a lot of money. He's— [*Hesitating.*]

GET-A-QUICK. Very, very lonely.

THE QUEEN [*her hand on her heart*]. Ohh! I know just how he feels. Perhaps—do you think I could? Perhaps I could comfort him. [ROAD-MENDER *almost bursts into a guffaw, but* GET-A-QUICK *steps on his foot just in time. So he turns it into a cough.*]

GET-A-QUICK. Hubble has a cold, Your Majesty. Shall I get his friend?

THE QUEEN [*sympathetically*]. Where did you catch such a— [*Remembering.*] Oh. Has his friend a cold too? A very old cold, with a white beard—I mean—

GET-A-QUICK [*smiling*]. A very old man.

THE QUEEN. With a very young voice, a surprisingly young voice. Now and then. Oh, do bring him up. [*As she turns.*] Now, if the stairs are too much for him, why I could come down, even if I am a Queen.

GET-A-QUICK [*running to door, right, and making believe she is surprised*]. Why, he's right here. [*Enter, very old, but very eager,* HENRY-FLORIZEL *in disguise.*]

THE QUEEN [*rising and starting to come down*]. Poor old man, can I help you?

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*in an ancient, ancient voice*]. No, don't disturb yourself. [ROAD-MENDER *turns away and puts his hand quickly over his mouth. He coughs, like an explosion, once.* GET-A-QUICK *pats him reprovingly on his back. As the* QUEEN *seats herself,* HENRY-FLORIZEL *bows.*] Thanks. I have come on a very important mission, Your Majesty. [*Standing slightly left of throne, he signals* ROAD-MENDER *and* GET-A-QUICK *to go.*]

GET-A-QUICK [*pointing to door, right*]. May we go, Dul-

sonia? [*The* QUEEN *is gazing interestedly at* HENRY-FLORIZEL *and scarcely hears.*] Hubble's cough—

THE QUEEN. Yes, dear Get-a-Quick, do go. Be careful of yourself, Hubble. And let me know when you two are to be married. I'll arrange everything for you.

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*politely, but firmly*]. Good morning. [*The* ROAD-MENDER, *grinning, touches his cap to both.* GET-A-QUICK *curtsies. Just before they exit, right,* ROAD-MENDER *puts his arm about* GET-A-QUICK *and whistles "Mine is a joyous life." Exeunt. The* QUEEN *watches them, sighing, her hand on her heart.* HENRY-FLORIZEL, *watching her lovingly—does the same, sighing long and deep. The* QUEEN *turns quickly, concerned.*]

THE QUEEN. Oh, you are tired. [*Pointing to step below her.*] Sit down.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. No, Your Majesty, I prefer the lower step. I'm very fond of these steps.

THE QUEEN [*on a little gulp*]. They're not as clean as usual. [*Then, being polite.*] But—what can I do for you? How is your cold? [*He coughs quickly, then speaks very brightly.*]

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Practically gone. How are your eyes? Can you see—lovingly?

THE QUEEN [*a little sadly yet*]. Oh, thank you. Much better. Every one seems quite beautiful. Even Alcibiades Promenone. And I—I—think I'm getting it back again. You know—what I lost. [*Eagerly.*] Am I?

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*like a young lover*]. I think you are the most dignified queen in the world! The most beautiful! The—

THE QUEEN [*leaning forward, excited*]. That voice!

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*deprecatingly, and very old*]. Young again! You remember I explained in the woods. Second childhood, and all that. Well, I've a message for you from Henry.

THE QUEEN. The page?

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Henry, the page. When he left the day before yesterday—

THE QUEEN [*on a small sob*]. Yes.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. He forgot to take his harp with him. It's a very-beloved harp.

THE QUEEN. Yes. I was hoping he would—come back for it. [HENRY-FLORIZEL *turns his face away. It is so young with excited joy. The* QUEEN *rises.*] I'll get it.

HENRY-FLORIZEL. No. He told me just where it was. Be seated. Near the beautiful round table, where she used to sit, like an angel, her work-basket in her lap, her divine hands idle, listening to—

THE QUEEN. Did he say that?

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Yes, often! Let me get it. I— [*He exits left.*]

THE QUEEN [*in divine despair*]. Oh, Henry—Henry—Henry! [*From without, the voice of* PRINCE HENRY-FLORIZEL, *young.*]

HENRY-FLORIZEL. Just a moment. [*The* QUEEN *sits right up, startled, questioning. After a moment the sound of a lover-like harp playing some beautiful introductory chords.*]

THE QUEEN [*just breathing it*]. Henry. [*He comes in singing. He is gowned in his kingly costume, all yellow and gold, and beautifully crowned. He is singing in his own voice, which is very mellow and tender, and is also tenor.*]

HENRY-FLORIZEL. "Drink to me only wi-th thine ey-es, And I—I will pledge with mine."

THE QUEEN [*rising*]. Henry. Henry-Florizel, the Wi—

HENRY-FLORIZEL. —the foolish, and foolishly called by his subjects, the Wise.

THE QUEEN. Subjects? And this crown?

HENRY-FLORIZEL. My father retired to his monastery last night, and I am King Henry-Florizel, the Wise,—no—[*smiling deprecatingly*]—the humble suitor for the hand of Queen Dulsonia, the beau—

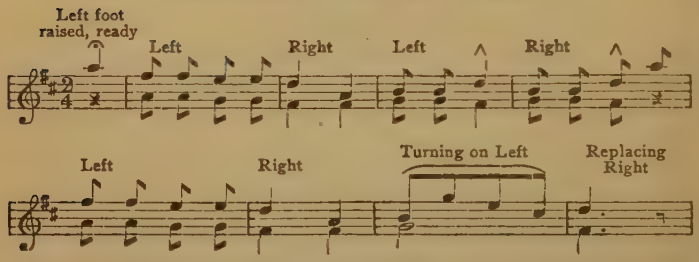
THE QUEEN [*leaning down, begging with her voice*]. No, not beautiful. You know, di—

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*gravely*]. Dulsonia, the dignified.

THE QUEEN [*in ecstasy, coming down a step*]. Henry!

HENRY-FLORIZEL [*opening his arms. His harp is in his left hand*]. Dulsonia!!! [*Quick curtain as she comes down the other steps, and is about to fall into his arms.*]

[CURTAIN.]

PROCEEDING TO FOOT OF THRONE

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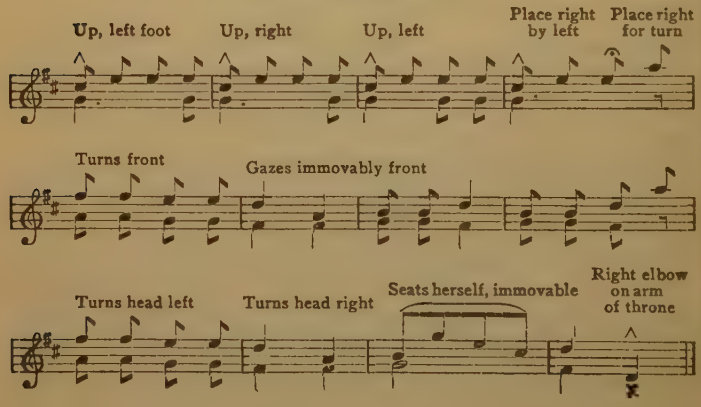

FOLLOWERS *

A "Cranford" Sketch

By

HAROLD BRIGHOUSE

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INTRODUCTION

FOLLOWERS

"Mrs. Gaskell is an excellent author to steal from," writes Harold Brighouse in his own introduction to *Followers,* "but, though her novels are equally the possession of us all, a dramatic common or open space where every dramatist has rights, *Cranford* offers perhaps the least promising field for stage adaptation. . . . It was, therefore, purely in an experimental spirit that I set out to see whether the fragile delicacy of *Cranford* could be translated with any measure of success into terms of the stage. I began by taking the story which very well might have been, and almost was, in Cranford, and I pretended that my little town was not Mrs. Gaskell's Cranford but a neighboring town rather like it. People read the result and said, 'But this is Cranford,'—which was precisely what I dared to hope they might say."

Cranford (1853), which suggested the simple sequence of events in *Followers,* was first published in *Household Words.* The various chapters of the novel were contributions sought by Charles Dickens, then editor of this magazine. The original of Cranford is Knutsford, a village near Manchester, where Mrs. Gaskell's girlhood was passed. Belonging to the same locality as Mrs. Gaskell did, Mr. Brighouse is by way of being the very person to adapt *Cranford* to the stage. Mr. Brighouse (born 1882) [1] is a Manchester man who belongs to the coterie

[1] For biographical sketch, see Introduction to *Maid of France,* in H. L. Cohen's *One-Act Plays by Modern Authors,* New York, 1921.

sometimes called the Manchester dramatists, a group of young authors whose playwriting was encouraged by the establishment, in 1908, of a repertory company at the Gaiety, a local theatre.

The name of Harold Brighouse's "Cranford Sketch" was suggested, no doubt, by a sentence in Chapter III of Mrs. Gaskell's *Cranford*. The domestic affairs of Miss Matilda Jenkyns, who may well be called the heroine of this delicate fiction, are being recounted. The servants in Miss Matty's household were very young girls who entered domestic service direct from a neighboring charity school. Of one of these pretty, neat maids Mrs. Gaskell writes: "She was forbidden, by the articles of her engagement, to have 'followers'; and though she had answered, innocently enough, doubling up the hem of her apron as she spoke, 'Please, ma'am, I never had more than one at a time,' Miss Matty prohibited that one."

Chapters III and IV of the novel *Cranford* contain the episode which is dramatized by Mr. Brighouse. In the novel Miss Matilda Jenkyns is the prototype of Lucinda Baines; Thomas Holbrook, the original of Colonel Redfern; and Martha, of the maid servant, Susan Crowther. The central incident of the play arises from "the shadow of a love affair dimly perceived or suspected long years before." Both in the novel and the play, the middle-aged spinster and her lover of long ago remain separated, but in the former, Thomas Holbrook dies. In both, the little maid servant at the end gains her point. In *Cranford* Miss Matty is made to say, "'God forbid that I should grieve any young hearts.' She spoke as if she were providing for some distant contingency and was rather startled when Martha made her ready, eager answer: 'Please, ma'am, there's Jem Hearn, and he's a joiner

making three-and-sixpence a day, and six foot one in his stocking feet, please, ma'am; and if you'll ask about him to-morrow morning, every one will give him a character for steadiness; and he'll be glad enough to come to-morrow night, I'll be bound.' Though Miss Matty was startled, she submitted to Fate and Love."

FOR SUPPLEMENTARY READING

Harold Brighouse, *Hobson's Choice,* Garden City, 1916.
Harold Brighouse, *Lonesomelike,* London, 1914.
Harold Brighouse, *Maid of France* (in H. L. Cohen, *One-Act Plays by Modern Authors,* New York, 1921).
Harold Brighouse, *Maypole Morning* (in *Plays for the Meadow and Plays for the Lawn,* New York).
Harold Brighouse, *The Price of Coal,* London, 1911.
Mrs. Gaskell, *Cousin Phyllis,* New York, 189-?; *Cranford,* New York, 1906.
M. B. Horne, *The Ladies of Cranford,* Boston, 1899.
Marguerite Merington, *Cranford: A Play,* New York, 1905.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

Why does Harold Brighouse call *Followers* a "sketch"?

In what illustrated editions of *Cranford* should you look for material to enable you to visualize the costumes and background of *Followers?*

Could the playwright have provided a "happy ending" with better dramatic effect?

How is the setting suggested?

Which personage of the play is most fully characterized?

What other episodes in *Cranford* would lend themselves to dramatization?

Write a paragraph commenting on this sentence from the author's foreword to *Followers:* "Books are their author's, but, in the making of a play, author, producer, actors, and audience must all collaborate."

CHARACTERS

LUCINDA BAINES.
HELEN MASTERS.
SUSAN CROWTHER.
COLONEL REDFERN.

Miss Baines's Parlour in June, 1859.

FOLLOWERS

THE SCENE *is the parlour of* MISS LUCINDA BAINES *at Cranford, in June, 1859. It is the room of an old maid of the period, overcrowded with fragile furniture, spattered with antimacassars and china. The room is filled with the bright light of a summer's morning. Bushes and green hedge are seen through the window, centre. The door is left.*

SUSAN CROWTHER, *a ruddy country girl of 22, shows in* HELEN MASTERS, *a young lady of the same age, in summer outdoor clothes.*

SUSAN. Miss Baines says, will you please take a seat, Miss Masters, and she'll be down in a minute.

HELEN [*not sitting*]. Susan, go at once and tell your mistress I shall be seriously offended if she has gone upstairs to change her cap on my account.

SUSAN [*severely*]. Miss Baines would not think of receiving a visitor without changing her cap, Miss Masters.

HELEN. I am not a visitor here, and, if I am, this is an early morning-call and—

SUSAN [*finally*]. Miss Baines is changing her cap and there's an end of it. She won't be long.

HELEN [*defeated, sitting*]. Oh, I am sorry, but this was my only opportunity of seeing her. I return to London this afternoon.

SUSAN [*awed*]. By the train, Miss?

HELEN [*smiling*]. Yes.

SUSAN. You have more courage than I have.

HELEN. Tell me, Susan, your mistress keeps well?

SUSAN. She's well enough. Will worry herself, you know. Solomon has been a great disappointment to her.

HELEN. Solomon? Who is Solomon?

SUSAN. Solomon is the cat. He had kittens, and the shock nearly sent Miss Baines to her bed.

HELEN. Oh, dear!

SUSAN. We still call her Solomon because she's used to it, but things will never be the same again. Miss Baines feels that Solomon has deceived her.

HELEN. And you, Susan?

SUSAN. Oh, I am quite well. Miss—[*pausing awkwardly, then*]—Miss Masters!

HELEN. Yes. Nothing wrong?

SUSAN. No, but—Miss Masters—you are one the mistress listens to. She's—there is one thing that sorely troubles me, and, if you would speak a word for me, I'm sure—

HELEN. What is it, Susan?

SUSAN. Well, Miss, when I came here ten years ago—straight from the Charity School it was—Miss Baines said when she took me, "Now, Susan, no followers," she said, and I said, "No, mem, never." I passed my word when I was too young to know, and there's many wouldn't keep it on that account, but—

HELEN. Do you want followers, Susan?

SUSAN. No, Miss, I don't. Not followers. One follower at a time's enough for any woman.

HELEN. You've somebody in mind?

SUSAN. I've seen James Brown look at me, and I wouldn't say if it wasn't for my promise but that James—

HELEN. I see.

SUSAN. But I promised, and I'm not the one to break my word, only when I try to put it to the mistress it's as if she saw it coming, and there's something in her eye that stops me asking. And it's not as if she never had a follower herself.

HELEN [*rising*]. Susan!

SUSAN [*defending herself*]. A body can't live ten years in Cranford without hearing that old story of Miss Baines and—

HELEN. Hush, Susan.

SUSAN. Well, it's true, and, what's more, he's back from India now. I've seen him.

HELEN. Mr. Redfern is back?

SUSAN. You spoke his name, not I. Yes, he's back.

HELEN. When?

SUSAN. I only know I was carrying the basket yesterday while Miss Baines bought the grocery in Mr. Wilson's shop, and there was a gentleman inside when we went in, buying matches to light his cheroot—

HELEN. A cheroot in Cranford High Street!

SUSAN. Yes, Miss, and he raised his hat to Miss Baines, and she gave a jump and held my arm hard, and just said, "Mr. Redfern"—gasping, like that—"Mr. Redfern," and went on giving her orders as if nothing had happened. She's a brave woman, though I say it that's her own servant. And, if she had him once, why mayn't I have James Brown?

HELEN. I will see what I can do, Susan. [*Enter* LUCINDA. *She is a fragile old maid of fifty, delicate in her dress, with transparent complexion, grey clothes, and lace cap.*]

LUCINDA. Helen!

HELEN. Dear Miss Baines. [*They kiss. Exit* SUSAN.] Pardon this early call.

LUCINDA. You could not come too early, Helen. [*They sit.*]

HELEN. This was my only chance. I arrived yesterday and return to-day.

LUCINDA. Cranford will not see much of you now.

HELEN. Now?

LUCINDA. I have heard the great news, Helen. You are betrothed.

HELEN. Yes, Miss Baines. [*Pause.*] You do not wish me joy.

LUCINDA. Child, I have always wished you every joy.

HELEN. I want you to know Harry, Miss Baines. He is here with me, but I know no gentleman has entered your house as long as I remember, yet I hoped you might make an exception in my case.

LUCINDA. Helen, you are not asking me to receive your affianced husband in this house?

HELEN. Forgive the recklessness of my desire. I have so great a wish that Harry should see this room where you taught me to work my samplers and to knit.

LUCINDA. I should take great pleasure in seeing him if I could meet him out. Here, as you know, I have no apartment suited for the entertainment of a gentleman. I should be in agonies for the safety of my china. I was for long uneasy about Solomon until I found that cats tread with the most prudent delicacy. But men's movements are singularly lacking in grace.

HELEN. Harry is very gentle.

LUCINDA. Without doubt, my dear. But a man is so much in the way in a house. He must himself feel out of place.

HELEN [*smiling*]. Would you have them live in the stables?

LUCINDA. I make no rule for others, Helen. For myself, I am quite decided.

HELEN. And for Susan too?

LUCINDA. Susan, my dear?

HELEN. Susan is in love, but she will not break the promise made to you.

LUCINDA. My dear, I said, "No followers," and I meant no followers. If Susan is in love she has her fortnightly evening, and I am broad-minded enough not to ask too closely with whom she walks to the Dorcas Meeting, but my kitchen is no place for Susan's sweetheart. Men of our own order speak habitually in voices too loud for a room, let alone one of Susan's class.

HELEN [*pleading*]. She finds it lonely, I am afraid.

LUCINDA. Susan has her work.

HELEN. Do you never feel lonely here in the dark winter evenings?

LUCINDA. Lonely, child? I used to be afraid of loneliness, and once, when there had been some burglaries in Cranford, I did think how much safer I should have felt with a husband by my side. . . . Does it shock you to hear me talk of husbands?

HELEN. No, no. I try not to speak the word myself, be-

cause I know that one should not before the time, but it cannot really be immodest.

LUCINDA. Yes, I remember the time when I looked forward to being married as much as any one, but the person I once thought I might be married to went far away because I said "No" when I didn't mean it, only he thought I did, and I don't know to this day why I did say "No" when all of me was throbbing to say "Yes." Oh, Helen, Helen, be very happy with your Harry. Thank God *you* did not say "No."

HELEN. I hope I am a modest woman, Miss Baines. I said "No" twice, but Harry asked three times, and at the third I thought it became me to yield.

LUCINDA. Mr. Redfern asked but once and then he went away.

HELEN. Mr. Redfern!

LUCINDA. That was his name. I did not mean to mention it. Pray forget I did so, Helen. Old memories are best forgotten.

HELEN. Mr. Redfern. But . . . Miss Baines . . . there is still the future.

LUCINDA. No, there are ghosts of the past that are hard to lay, but for me there is no future. I have lived so long with my shadows that I should fear the light.

HELEN. Your shadows?

LUCINDA. Oh, you will not come to live in the shadow-world. There in the light your husband and your children are waiting and calling for you to come.

HELEN. You make me feel ashamed.

LUCINDA. Ashamed? Whatever for? Be proud of life and joy.

HELEN. I have so much. I want so much and you are contented with so little.

LUCINDA. I? Life is for the young, life and the golden day. For me, age and the shadows. Yes, Helen, I used to be afraid of loneliness. I used to weep because the days were long and the nights were longer still.

HELEN. And now?

LUCINDA. Now I have the children of my dreams. They are just like other people's children, Helen, only mine are all, all my own. They don't grow up. They don't grow big and clumsy. They are always small and neat, and beautiful and well-behaved. They come to me when I am alone, and then, you see, I am not alone. They sit upon those seats that I keep near the fire, so that in winter they can watch the glow —that is Mary's, and the little hassock there is John's—and their boots are never dirty, and they don't disturb the anti-macassars, and their voices are soft and low. And in the night I have wakened with the clasp of their arms about my neck, and my darlings put up their little mouths to mine to be kissed just as I've seen real babies do to real mothers.

HELEN. I wonder if it is better so.

LUCINDA [*with energy*]. No, no. Never. Forget this, Helen. I have spoken things I did not mean to speak. Tell me more of your betrothal. Is your trousseau far advanced? You must have lavender from my garden. Lavender for one's dresses and rose-leaves for one's rooms. And I have both for you. [*Enter* SUSAN.]

SUSAN [*awkwardly*]. Miss Baines.

LUCINDA. What is it, Susan?

SUSAN. There's a gentleman at the door, and he is asking for you.

LUCINDA. A gentleman!

SUSAN [*volubly*]. Oh, Miss Baines, if you please, it's the gentleman we saw yesterday in Mr. Wilson's shop, only he is dressed grander still to-day. I told him you couldn't see him, but I might as well have talked at the wall of a house.

LUCINDA [*pauses, then collects her courage*]. I will see him, Susan, please.

SUSAN [*staggered*]. In here?

LUCINDA. Yes.

SUSAN. Save us, what goings-on. [*Exit* SUSAN.]

LUCINDA. Helen, stand by me. This is my hour of trial. Don't leave me, child.

HELEN. Not if you wish me to remain.

LUCINDA. My courage is not all I could desire. Thank God, you are here, Helen. It's a mercy you came and I changed my cap for you.

HELEN. You're looking splendid, dear; you have a colour.

LUCINDA. I am all of a twitter. Is my cap straight?

HELEN. You are perfect.

LUCINDA. Helen, what should I offer him? Do gentlemen take gooseberry wine? Do they drink tea in the morning? I don't know anything. I am so ignorant of men.

HELEN. He will not want anything but you. [*Enter* SUSAN, *smirking, and* CHARLES REDFERN. *Exit* SUSAN *without announcing.* REDFERN *is a spare, soldierly figure of fifty-five, grey-haired, very brown, dressed carefully. He is shy, talking at one moment as if addressing a squad, then, remembering, is subdued for a time before resuming his usual commanding tone.*]

LUCINDA [*bowing*]. Mr. Redfern.

REDFERN [*bowing*]. Colonel, Madam, Colonel, retired from the service of the East India Company.

LUCINDA [*introducing*]. Colonel Redfern. My god-daughter, Miss Masters. [*They bow.*]

REDFERN. Your servant, madam.

LUCINDA. Will you sit down, Colonel? [REDFERN *looks doubtfully.*] . . . er . . . That chair is stronger than it looks. I think you have no cause for apprehension.

REDFERN [*sitting*]. I thank you, madam. [*It is a very low chair and his long legs make him acutely conscious of it.*]

LUCINDA. May I offer you refreshment, Colonel? A little gooseberry wine, or—

REDFERN. I thank you, no. I do not like gooseberries. [*He looks at* HELEN, *resenting her presence. Pause.*]

LUCINDA [*embarrassed but brave*]. You must find Cranford a dull place after your martial career, Colonel Redfern.

REDFERN. I find it very pleasant to be back in England.

LUCINDA. It is safer, I have no doubt. Did you find the Asiatics very fierce?

REDFERN [*glancing at* HELEN]. I have not come here to talk about myself, Miss Baines.

LUCINDA. But yours has been an adventurous life. Surely—

REDFERN. Pardon me, madam, a soldier's tales are not for a lady's ear. My life is of less interest to you than yours is to me.

LUCINDA. Mine! But I—

REDFERN [*rising*]. Yes. That is what I have come to hear, and as Miss Masters is your god-daughter she must know all about you, and I fear it would only weary her to hear you telling me.

LUCINDA. I am sure Helen will not mind. I have nothing to tell.

HELEN [*rising*]. Yes, Colonel Redfern, I ought to leave you two old friends together.

LUCINDA [*rising, frightened*]. But, Helen! Colonel, your arrival interrupted us. Helen was telling me of her betrothal.

REDFERN [*bowing*]. I congratulate Miss Masters.

HELEN. Thank you, Colonel Redfern.

LUCINDA. Go on, Helen.

HELEN. Really, Miss Baines, there is nothing more to tell.

REDFERN. Ah! And so?

HELEN. May I have a word with Susan before I go?

LUCINDA. You are not going!

HELEN. I must.

LUCINDA. But—

HELEN. I will step in later on to say farewell. Good morning, Colonel Redfern.

REDFERN [*opening door and bowing*]. Good morning, Miss Masters [*as she passes him*], and bless you for a sensible girl. [*Exit* HELEN. *He turns from closing door and speaks commandingly.*] Now, Lucy.

LUCINDA [*faintly protesting*]. Colonel Redfern!

REDFERN. I remind you, Lucy, that my Christian name is Charles.

LUCINDA. I had not forgotten.

REDFERN. Nor the last time you called me by it, I warrant. This very room, wasn't it? I never had such a downfall in my life. In I came, found you alone, popped the question, and when you rapped out your "No" I could have dropped through the floor for simple wonderment, I'd made so sure you were only waiting to be asked. I've taken some gruelling in my time, but I was never harder hit than on that day—how many?—twenty-five years ago?

LUCINDA. Twenty-five years, three months, ten days. It was March seventeenth, 1834.

REDFERN. Ah? So you've not forgotten. No, nor I. Nor the way I cut and ran like a whipped dog with my tail between my legs—all the way to India as fast as sail and wind would carry me. And, do you know, Lucy, I've been trying ever since the day I landed there to get home again. For twenty-five years I've been trying. That's why I never wrote. I always expected to be here myself as quickly as a letter. At first I couldn't get leave, and if I had I couldn't have paid my passage, and when I got leave I had fever, and when I recovered from the fever I'd to go on active service—and when I was better from my wound—

LUCINDA. You were wounded!

REDFERN. A trifle that time, but it kept me there till the next affair, and so it's gone on all these years till the Mutiny came, and I went through that without a scratch, and thought it time to send my papers in and make for home. And that's the last word I'll say about myself. Now, Lucy, what have you been doing?

LUCINDA. I? Living at home.

REDFERN. Do you know what home means to me? I used to hear the other fellows talk of home—mothers, sisters, sweethearts, wives, and children. Home meant something to us all. It meant Cranford to me.

LUCINDA. But you hadn't used to live in Cranford.

REDFERN. You did, and Cranford meant you. Lucy, don't you know why I have come home?

LUCINDA. Have you not reached the age for retirement?

REDFERN. Age? I am as young as on the day I went away. I've come to ask you a question, Lucy. It's the doubt that lay heavy on my mind the day I landed in India, and made me want to take the next ship home, and it's not grown less since then. It's this—suppose I hadn't listened to you, suppose I had asked again, would you still have told me "No"?

LUCINDA. How can I tell what I should have said?

REDFERN. Come, Lucy, you had the date off pat. You'd not forgotten that.

LUCINDA. It is all so many years ago.

REDFERN. You mean I am to let bygones be bygones.

LUCINDA. If you please, Colonel Redfern.

REDFERN. No, madam, I do not please. But I obey. The past is past—but there remains the future.

LUCINDA. Are you going to make your future home in Cranford, Colonel?

REDFERN. I hope so, Lucy. I shall stay on at the George until I've looked round and then, I trust, anchorage.

LUCINDA. Then no doubt we shall have friends in common at whose houses we may chance to meet sometimes.

REDFERN. Other people's houses! You're a cordial hostess, Lucy.

LUCINDA. Colonel Redfern, you have recalled the occasion when last you visited me. My father was already dead, and, since the day of your call, no gentleman has entered my house until to-day. Your coming here breaks all my rules.

REDFERN. Then I think it's time you had a little male society.

LUCINDA. This is an old maid's house.

REDFERN. Old maid be hanged. I beg your pardon, Lucy. A soldier's bluntness. But I am seeing you now as I saw you then with your bonny face and those dear blue eyes with what I fancied was the love-light in them, though now I know that it was just the sunshine of your soul, and the smile that has made my fever-bed a thing of joy because I could lie still and think of you and—and—yes, madam, I will say it—the neatest ankle in the world peeping out below your petticoats. The

Lord forgive me for recalling such a thing, but you wouldn't believe the comfort that ankle's been to me in India.

LUCINDA. Colonel, hadn't you better rub your eyes?

REDFERN. Why, madam?

LUCINDA. To see me as I am.

REDFERN. I see no change. It might have been yesterday.

LUCINDA. You are laughing at me.

REDFERN. I do not laugh at my divinity.

LUCINDA. Then it is your pleasure, sir, to be gallant, and I suggest you find a better subject for your gallantry than a lean and wrinkled—

REDFERN. Lucy, have you a looking-glass?

LUCINDA. I see my wrinkles in it every day.

REDFERN. Your glass tells lies.

LUCINDA. Colonel, I am too old for compliments. May I ask you to state what is the object of your visit?

REDFERN. The object, madam? Upon my word, you are a little short.

LUCINDA. I find you, sir, a little long.

REDFERN. Very well, madam, I will be brief. It is not the custom of the Service to beat about the bush. I have an object, and the object is to ask you to be my wife. It's the second time of asking, Lucy, and it's a plaguey long time since the first, but that was not my fault. It's the lady's privilege to change her mind. Won't you change yours?

LUCINDA. Yes, Charles, my mind is changed.

REDFERN [*approaching gladly*]. Lucy?

LUCINDA [*backing with hand up*]. You do not understand.

REDFERN. I understand that you have changed your mind, and—

LUCINDA. Charles, when I said "No," it was my lips that spoke. My mind, my heart were aching to say "Yes"—five-and-twenty years ago. To-day I am all united when I answer "No."

REDFERN. Ah, but I'll not take "No" this time. I'll ask and ask again until—

LUCINDA. Till what, Charles? Till I become a girl again? Your asking will not bring back my youth, nor yours.

REDFERN. Mine? Time does not matter if love keeps young.

LUCINDA. Has yours kept young?

REDFERN. It is young and fresh and strong as on the day I went away. It's never flagged. It's—

LUCINDA. And I will tell you why. Because you went away and had a great career in India. You put your love aside and filled your mind with other thoughts.

REDFERN. Not filled.

LUCINDA. Oh, sparing me a small recess, securely sealed, as I seal up my autumn plums. You took it out sometimes, that thought of me, to polish up and put it back in its recess until the next campaign was over and gave you leisure for another look. But I'd no splendid wars to occupy my mind. I had no seal to put upon my love to keep it fresh. The pain was great until Time came to heal the open sore. Time put a halo round your love for me, but Time killed mine for you.

REDFERN. Lucy, it is not too late. Love doesn't die. It sleeps. Let me awaken yours to life.

LUCINDA. It has been too late for many years. Charles, I want you to understand. It is too late. I do not look for happiness. I have contentment.

REDFERN. And what have I?

LUCINDA. You have had your life, a full life, Charles; a man's life.

REDFERN. I have lived on hopes. I can't live on regrets.

LUCINDA. Change them to memories.

REDFERN. Of what?

LUCINDA. Of what? For you the years have brought a great career. For me catastrophe.

REDFERN. Then—then is there no hope for me, Lucy?

LUCINDA. None.

REDFERN [*moving towards door*]. In India, I have not known defeat.

LUCINDA. You are back in England now, Colonel.

REDFERN. Colonel!

LUCINDA [*extending hand*]. Good-bye, Charles.

REDFERN [*taking it, appealingly*]. Lucy! [*She shakes her head.*] Good-bye. [*Exit* REDFERN. LUCY *sits, opens the locket which she wears on a chain round her neck and buries it against her face, kissing it. Enter* HELEN *softly.*]

HELEN. May I come in?

LUCINDA [*kissing locket*]. Helen, did I disappoint you greatly when I said I could not receive your Harry?

HELEN. We both hoped very much that he might come.

LUCINDA. Helen, tell him from me that he may come, just once, if he will wipe his boots most carefully and sit there quietly in the centre of the room.

HELEN. Oh, thank you, Miss Baines. You can't tell how much pleasure you will give us both. [*Exit* HELEN. MISS BAINES *carefully straightens her antimacassars.* SUSAN *knocks.*]

LUCINDA. Come in. [SUSAN *enters.*]

SUSAN [*awed*]. Miss Baines!

LUCINDA. What is it, Susan?

SUSAN. The gentleman.

LUCINDA. Yes?

SUSAN. He gave me this. [*Showing sovereign.*] Am I to keep it, mem?

LUCINDA. Certainly, Susan.

SUSAN. He said it was for a new gown or—or a present for my sweetheart and—oh, Miss, I do not want a gown, and I do so want a sweetheart, and I don't care if it is forward to say it, for I do.

LUCINDA. You remember I said "No followers," Susan.

SUSAN. Yes, Miss, I have not forgotten, nor likely to, neither.

LUCINDA. You are young, Susan.

SUSAN. Not me. I'm twenty-three in November.

LUCINDA. Yes, you're young.

SUSAN. Too young for a sweetheart, Miss?

LUCINDA. No, Susan. I did say you were to have no fol-

lowers, but if you meet with a man you like and let me know, and I find on proper inquiry that he is respectable, I shall have no objection to his coming to see you once a week, if he will promise to move carefully in the kitchen and abstain from raising his voice.

SUSAN [*kneeling at* LUCINDA'S *feet*]. Oh, Miss Baines!

LUCINDA [*simply*]. God forbid that I should grieve any young hearts.

[CURTAIN.]

BROTHER SUN *

By

LAURENCE HOUSMAN

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INTRODUCTION

BROTHER SUN

In the United States, Laurence Housman is probably best known as one of the authors of that quaint and whimsical play of youthful enchantment, *Prunella*. But his reputation as a gifted writer and artist is solidly founded on his authorship of about forty volumes of plays, fairy tales, essays, poetry, novels, and biography, a number of which he has himself illustrated.

Laurence Housman belongs to a gifted family. His older brother, A. E. Housman, is the author of *The Shropshire Lad* and of *Last Poems*. His sister, Clemence Housman, is an artist of distinction. Laurence Housman was born June 18, 1867. He studied at the art school at South Kensington in London, and first made a name for himself as a book illustrator. He and his sister have frequently collaborated, she illustrating his books, and he hers. An American girl, Miss Helen Walker, who was a guest at their home in 1912, published recently in *The Literary Review* her impressions of Laurence Housman and his sister. Miss Walker marshals her memories thus:

As a school girl, on holiday in London from a Swiss boarding school, I went with my hostess to Sunday night tea at the Housmans' in 1912. Then Laurence and his sister Clemence had a charming little house, which they occupied together with an enormous black cat. These three were the household, and Master Cat was not the least important. He was lovely,

and sleek, and dusky (why are all London cats, even of the alley genus, so much larger than our home product?), and the great pet and confidant of Laurence.

Clemence was the châtelaine of that delightful little ménage; and I remember that then in London the devotion that exists between this brother and sister was frequently compared to the affection that drew the brother and sister of another literary era together—Charles and Mary Lamb.

Just a few months ago, visiting in London once more, I used to write my letters at a desk on which stood an utterly charming pen-and-ink drawing by Laurence Housman—a drawing of "Prunella" herself. He had drawn her with her back turned, standing on a chair, facing the wall, but for all that her face is hidden she is a very lovable Prunella, because of the demure way her hair is parted down the back of her little head and drawn aside into two little pigtails at the bottom, which, tied at the end with bows, stick out a trifle impertinently from the back of her neck. This might be offensive to a public that prefers its Prunella curled (but she really is Mr. Housman's Prunella first, and he must have planned her with pigtails).

Soon after my first glimpse of her on the pen-and-ink chair (her petticoat hangs a wee, ruffly bit) Laurence Housman came to dinner, which he enlivened with a description of a plot of his, either for a play not yet written or for one written but not produced (I'm ashamed to say I can't remember), but it concerned a poor little fairy who, in the eyes of skeptics, seemed only to be a withered leaf, and who was shut up in a chest by a testy old man and who cried to get out—and many more arresting happenings.

After dinner Mr. Housman obligingly talked poetry. He caused much laughter by imitating what he called the new English school of "readers-aloud," who, in the salons of literary London, recite verse in a hollow-chested, sepulchral, singsong tone—monotonous, and with a slight raising of the voice at the end of the stanza.

He chanted to us in this manner a lovely little burlesque of

his brother-poet, Yeats, which he had, in high good humor and unmaliciously, invented in that scribe's best Celtic manner.

He was understanding, and simple, and jovial with the young people there that night, and when his dinner partner confessed that her romantic ideal was a man yet undiscovered, who had a passion for Dostoievsky and apricot tarts, he promptly announced that he was that man. We loved him.

When Mr. Housman visited America for the second time, in 1920, he said of his own work: "I think it curious how one finds unity in life almost without striving for it. I have written and lectured: have been poet, essayist, novelist, dramatist, romancer, and sometimes propagandist. To-day I find that each of these activities has led me towards the same goal. It is a philosophy of quietism [1] at which I am arriving; I admire St. Francis more than any other man."

Brother Sun is one of a group of eighteen plays that Laurence Housman has written on the life of St. Francis. Francis, called sometimes "everybody's saint," was born in the little hill town of Assisi, in central Italy, in 1181 or 1182. His father, Pietro Bernadone, was a prosperous merchant, who, happening to be sojourning in the pleasant land of France when the future saint was born, decided that the child should be christened Francesco. As Francesco or Francis, as he is called in English, grew up he became known as a leader among the gay young men of the neighborhood, but, his frivolities notwithstanding, he was always credited with being especially kind to the poor. When Assisi went to war with Perugia, a rival municipality, Francesco, at the age of twenty, took up arms for his city, was captured in battle and spent a year in prison in Perugia.

[1] A life of contemplation and of withdrawal from feverish activities.

Shortly after his release he fell seriously ill. During the long months of seclusion he became very thoughtful about his careless way of living. He began to consider more and more seriously the idea of giving up his days wholly to prayer and good works. Finally he took the great step. He renounced the world, and, as the Middle Ages put it, made poverty his bride. Many touching stories are told of the change of heart he experienced.

Other men joined Francis in this life of poverty and devotion to the sick and poor. These associates formed the group which was the beginning of the great order of the Franciscans.

The character of Francis of Assisi is one of the most lovable in history. Consistently and constantly joyous, he chose song always as an easy and natural form of expression. His sympathy with nature in all its aspects, but especially with birds and beasts, is childlike and charming. Longfellow made the legend of the saint's sermon to the birds the subject of one of his best-known poems. From it the following stanzas are taken:

Around Assisi's convent gate
The birds, God's poor, who cannot wait,
From moor and mere and darksome wood
Came flocking for their dole of food.

"O brother birds," St. Francis said,
"Ye come to me and ask for bread,
But not with bread alone to-day
Shall ye be fed and sent away.

"Ye shall be fed, ye happy birds,
With manna of celestial words
Not mine, though mine they seem to be,
Not mine, though they be spoken through me.

" Oh, doubly are ye bound to praise
The great Creator in your lays;
He giveth you your plumes of down,
Your crimson hoods, your cloaks of brown.

" He giveth you your wings to fly
And breathe a purer air on high,
And careth for you everywhere,
Who for yourselves so little care! "

. . . . . .

He knew not if the brotherhood
His homily had understood;
He only knew that to one ear
The meaning of his words was clear.[1]

It is also related that it was his habit to call upon " Sister Moon," or " Brother Wind " or " Sister Water " to praise the Lord.

About 1219 Francis, wishing to convert the Saracens, traveled to Egypt where the Crusaders were besieging the town of Damietta. A contemporary French historian relates thus the circumstances on which *Brother Sun* is based: " The master of these Brothers is named Brother Francis; he is so lovable that he is venerated by every one. Having come into our army, he has not been afraid, in his zeal for the faith, to go to that of our enemies. For days together he announced the word of God to the Saracens, but with little success; then the sultan, King of Egypt, asked him in secret to entreat God to reveal to him, by some miracle, which is the best religion."

Francis and his companions were treated with great kindness by the Saracens and were allowed to return in safety to the camps of the Crusaders, where they re-

[1] H. W. Longfellow, *The Sermon of St. Francis.*

mained till the fall of Damietta on November 5, 1219. From Egypt Francis passed on to the Holy Land, where he lingered till September, 1220.

St. Francis died at Assisi in his forty-sixth year, in October, 1220.

FOR SUPPLEMENTARY READING

Bernard Berenson, *A Sienese Painter of the Franciscan Legend,* London, 1910. (Interesting to young people only for its twenty-six illustrations.)

Encyclopædia Britannica: Article on Francis of Assisi.

Maurice F. Egan, *Everybody's St. Francis,* with pictures by M. Boutet de Monvel, New York, 1912.

Laurence Housman, *As Good as Gold,* New York.

Laurence Housman, *The Chinese Lantern,* New York.

Laurence Housman, *A Likely Story,* New York.

Laurence Housman, *The Lord of the Harvest,* New York

Laurence Housman, *The Return of Alcestis,* New York.

Laurence Housman, *The Snow Man,* New York.

Laurence Housman and Harley Granville Barker, *Prunella,* Boston, 1921.

Stark Young, *The Twilight Saint* (in Cohen, *One-Act Plays by Modern Authors,* New York, 1921).

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

What characteristics of St. Francis does the Captain in his description make evident to the Soldan?

Is the Crusade which forms the background of this play before or after the one from which in *Ivanhoe* King Richard returns?

Why does the Councillor "thread" the ring upon the red cord?

Illustrate in a paragraph the saying of St. Francis to the Soldan: "He that putteth chains upon others is chained also."

What is a talisman?

What have plays like *Brother Sun* and *Paddly Pools* in common?

How should you plan the changes in lighting if you were producing this play? (Consult A. E. Krows, *Play Production in America,* New York, 1916; I. Pichel, *On Building a Theatre,* New York, 1920, and C. Stratton, *On Producing in Little Theatres,* New York, 1921.)

What "dramatic purpose" does Brother Illuminato serve in this play?

How does the character of the Soldan change in the course of the action?

What kind of struggle or conflict makes this episode of St. Francis's life dramatic?

Compare the design for this play with the paintings by Sassetta and Giotto of St. Francis before the Soldan. Both are reproduced in Berenson's book.

BROTHER SUN

SCENE: *The camp of the Saracens before Damietta, looking out eastward over the sands and lagoons.*

In a large circular tent, gorgeously hung with arras of gold and scarlet, the SOLDAN *sits enthroned on a high dais. Upon the steps to right and left, in order of rank, stand his* EMIRS *and* COUNCILLORS. *Before the entrance are armed* SOLDIERS *and around the tent-walls* NUBIAN SLAVES *and* ARAB SERVANTS. *Against the pole of the tent stands the* SOLDAN'S SWORDBEARER. *The door is wide open, revealing the red glare of an Eastern day now nearing its end. Before the* SOLDAN *stands the* CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD.

SOLDAN. Two men, you say, Captain? What like are they?

CAPTAIN. Beggars, Soldan, to look upon; ragged, bare-foot, and very weary.

SOLDAN. Whence come they?

CAPTAIN. From the camp of the Infidel—so they say.

SOLDAN. Had they arms?

CAPTAIN. No, Soldan.

SOLDAN. How came they in?

CAPTAIN. They were in our midst before we knew. Because the hand of Heaven seemed on them, our outposts had let them pass.

SOLDAN. The hand of Heaven?

CAPTAIN. As being of those afflicted ones on whom Allah bids us have pity, Soldan.

SOLDAN. Madmen?

CAPTAIN. Such I took them to be when first I saw them. But now, having questioned them, I am in doubt.

SOLDAN. Wherefore?

CAPTAIN. Because, though their speech is sane, what they do is contrary.

SOLDAN. Aye? How?

CAPTAIN. They seem to make mock of us, Soldan; and of the peril they stand in. When I warned them of death they did but smile; when we used them roughly, they seemed grateful to us; when we put chains on them they laughed and sang. Some say they be magicians, Soldan, and would have no dealings with them.

SOLDAN. Said they for what cause they came?

CAPTAIN. To bring thee peace, Soldan.

SOLDAN. Peace? Are they ambassadors?

CAPTAIN. I know not, Soldan. Their message, they said, was for thee.

SOLDAN. Well, I will see for myself. Bring them in. [*The* CAPTAIN *goes, followed by his Guard. The* EMIRS *and* COUNCILLORS *show perturbation.*]

COUNCILLOR. O Soldan, is it forgiven if now we speak?

SOLDAN. Speak, any who will.

COUNCILLOR. Have a care, dread King! For though these men be not armed, they may have power of evil.

SOLDAN. Very like. Has not the Most High commanded us to fight evil?

COUNCILLOR. But these having no arms, Soldan, how canst thou fight them?

SOLDAN. How can they fight us?

COUNCILLOR. By evil enchantments, Soldan.

SOLDAN. And have we none wiser that can withstand them? See to it. To your charge I commit me. Do ye your office, while I do mine.

COUNCILLOR. Commander of the Faithful, it shall be done. [*One of the* COUNCILLORS, *taking from his finger a ring, threads it upon a red cord; the cord is drawn across the front of the dais, the ring suspended upon it, during the scene that follows. A sound of chains is heard, and the tread of the Guard approaching. The voice of the* CAPTAIN *outside cries* "Halt!" *The* CAPTAIN *enters.*]

CAPTAIN. The prisoners are here, Soldan.

SOLDAN. Bring them. [FRANCIS *and* BROTHER ILLUMINATO *are brought in, and kept closely guarded at a safe and respectful distance from the* SOLDAN'S *person.*] Who art thou?

FRANCIS. Thy lover and servant, Soldan.

SOLDAN. Who is this with thee?

FRANCIS. He also is thy lover and servant, Soldan.

SOLDAN. Whence come ye?

FRANCIS. From the Camp of thine enemy.

SOLDAN. Of whom, also, ye are?

FRANCIS. We are of the same race, Soldan.

SOLDAN. Wherefore, then, come ye here?

FRANCIS. To set thee free, O King.

SOLDAN. From whom?

FRANCIS. From fear.

SOLDAN. Fear? I fear no man.

FRANCIS. Thou bearest arms, Soldan. He that is without fear bears none.

SOLDAN. Why then, in the Camp of the Christians also there is fear!

FRANCIS. Aye. Very greatly they fear thee, Soldan.

SOLDAN. They do well.

FRANCIS. They would do better if they did not fear thee.

SOLDAN. Dost not thou fear me?

FRANCIS. No, Soldan. [*This causes no little stir among the* EMIRS *and* COUNCILLORS. *The* SWORDSMAN'S *hand instinctively takes a better grip on his weapon, as with sidelong glance he waits the word of command.*]

SOLDAN. Come! What art thou here for?

FRANCIS. To take thy chains from thee.

SOLDAN. I have no chains.

FRANCIS. O Soldan, are not these thy chains?

SOLDAN [*grimly amused*]. Aye: but *thou* wearest them.

FRANCIS. He that putteth chains upon others is chained also. [*A murmur of angry astonishment comes from the assembled* COUNCILLORS.]

AN EMIR. When is this man to die, Soldan?

SOLDAN. Not at thy bidding, Emir. At mine.

COUNCILLORS [*in a fierce whisper of impatience*]. Aye!

SOLDAN. Come hither! [*The Guard bring* FRANCIS *to the foot of the dais.*] I said not "*bring* him hither." Stand back! [*The Guard fall back. The* SOLDAN *comes down from his throne, takes hold of the fetters, and weighs them in his hand.*] So these are *my* chains that thou wearest?

FRANCIS. Very willingly, Soldan.

SOLDAN [*sarcastically*]. I thank thee. . . . Thinkest thou that I am in fear of thee? [FRANCIS *looks from* SOLDAN *to suspended ring and back again; and there is a suspicion of amusement in his tone as he answers.*]

FRANCIS. I know not, Soldan. [*The* SOLDAN *snaps the thread. The ring falls.* FRANCIS *stoops, picks up the ring, and hands it to the* SOLDAN.]

COUNCILLOR. Beware, Soldan!

SOLDAN [*returning to his place*]. Take from him his chains: his also. [*The chains upon* FRANCIS *and* BROTHER ILLUMINATO *are struck off.*] Stand away! Do not hold them! . . . Prisoner, . . . where are my chains now?

FRANCIS. Upon thy heart, Soldan; yea, and upon thy soul. To us thou hast been gentle and gracious; but not unto thyself. For though thou givest freedom to others, to thine own self thou art yet a prisoner. [*The* SOLDAN *lays by the talisman he has been holding.*]

SOLDAN. And from this prison wherein I am,—who shall set me free?

FRANCIS. Thou Prince of Majesty, holder of power and glory, give thyself into my hand, and I will lead thee.

SOLDAN. Whither?

FRANCIS. To thy Lord and my Lord which died for us.

SOLDAN. *My* Lord, thou sayest!

FRANCIS. Aye; for though thou see it not, His Light is already in thee. This is the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

SOLDAN. And thou, also, art a Christian?

FRANCIS. God knows I would I were worthy to be called so.

SOLDAN. Is the way, then, so hard?

FRANCIS. Nay; but most sweet, and easy, and comforting. And yet I stray. [*There is a pause: outside the light of day begins to fail.*]

SOLDAN. How wouldst thou make me—a Christian?

FRANCIS. I would show thee Christ, Soldan. Or, if by that name thou know Him not, then by His other name which is Love, wherein also dwell Joy and Peace. This have I come to show.

SOLDAN. Yea: speak!

FRANCIS. Oh, hearken, for this is wonder!

Light looked down and beheld Darkness.
"Thither will I go," said Light.
Peace looked down and beheld War.
"Thither will I go," said Peace.
Love looked down, and beheld Hatred.
"Thither will I go," said Love.
So came Light, and shone.
So came Peace, and gave rest.
So came Love, and brought Life.
And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us.

Then was He betrayed, and given up into the hands of sinful men: Light to the darkness of Death, Peace unto the pains of Hell, Love to the separation of the grave. And because the power of Evil prevailed not against Him, these henceforth He holdeth, and they are His. So out of Darkness He wrought Light, and Peace out of the pains of Hell, and out of the prison-house of Death He bringeth us Life Eternal.

SOLDAN. Knowest thou this of thyself? or did others tell it thee?

FRANCIS. O Soldan, were it not true, wouldst thou not already have slain me?

SOLDAN. I may slay thee yet, prisoner: for I have not let thee go.

FRANCIS. What I have spoken thou hast heard. How wilt thou fear me less when I am dead?

SOLDAN. I . . . fear *thee?*

FRANCIS. When I am dead, Soldan, thou wilt remember me.

SOLDAN. Go on, prisoner. Say what thou hast to say, while yet there is time. [*It begins to get dark.*]

FRANCIS. Soldan, as I came hither, there met me in the way a great army of ants—many thousands of them, all hither and thither running without rest. What was their toil, whose word they obeyed, I could not tell; but they were all very full of it—in a world of their own. So I stood and looked at them; but though very plainly I saw them, they saw not me. I was nothing to them. Yet, had I so wished, I could have killed every one of them.

SOLDAN. Wherefore dost thou tell me this?

FRANCIS. Because thou art a great king, Soldan, and I am in thy power; and which of us is to die first—thou or I—we know not. But God, Whom we see not, knows.

SOLDAN. Which is to die first?

FRANCIS. Aye.

SOLDAN. Knowest *thou* not?

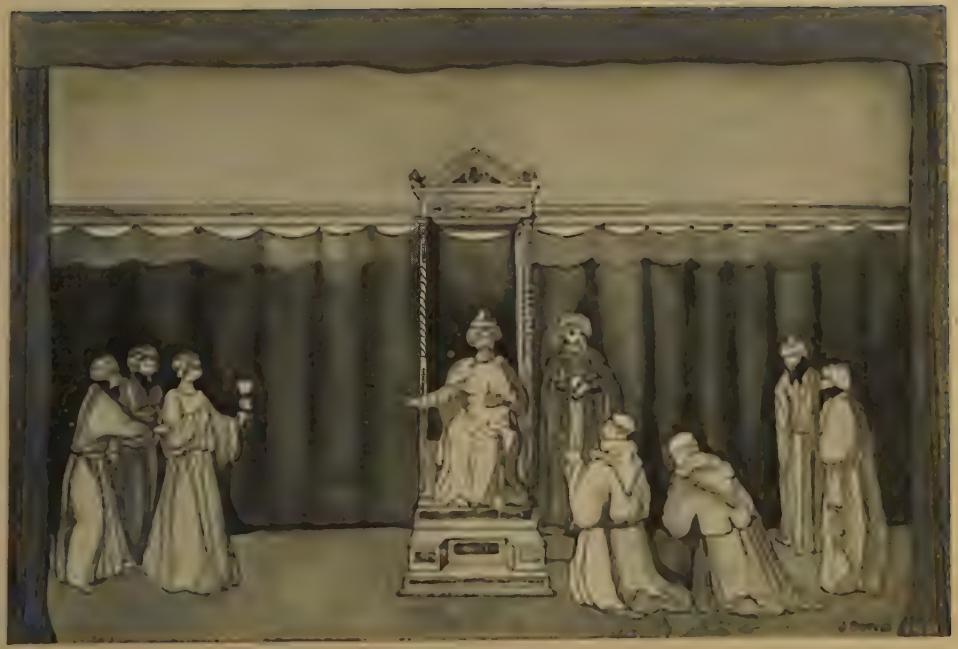
FRANCIS. No, Soldan: nor dost thou. For thou art in His hands, even as I am; and He careth for both alike, having for each of us the same compassion.

SOLDAN. As thou also for the ants?

FRANCIS. Yes, Soldan. And they may have had kings among them,—yet I could not tell which *was* their king,—they being all so much alike—even as we are.

SOLDAN [*to an* ATTENDANT]. Slave, bring in the lamps. . . . Thou and I alike, dost thou say?

FRANCIS. In the eyes of God, Soldan; aye, and of men also. For look!—thou hast hands, and feet, and so have I; and on each hand five fingers, and to each finger three joints; and at the end are nails. So also our bodies,—search as thou wilt, we are made alike. Also what thou seest, I see; and what thou hearest, I hear. In all these things we are alike, Soldan, because God has so willed Who made us. [*Lights are brought in; over the* SOLDAN'S *throne is set a lamp. Round the wall stand* TORCHBEARERS. *The outer air goes dark.*]



BROTHER SUN

Saint Francis Before the Soldan

SOLDAN. That is true. Stand near, Brother Ant! I would look on thee, and see more of that likeness to myself whereof thou speakest. . . . Aye; thou hast a face and eyes, which now see; thou hast limbs, and there is blood in them; thou hast flesh that can feel pain; and thou hast a head and a neck, even as I have. But for all we be so much alike, hast thou power to do presently what I shall do?

FRANCIS. No, Soldan. Many things thou canst do which I cannot.

SOLDAN. Whence comes that?

FRANCIS. From God, Soldan: not from thy feet, nor thy hands, nor thy head. That which a man does comes from his heart.

SOLDAN. Truly said.

FRANCIS. And thy heart and mine are two, not one. We be fellow men, but separate; we look upon each other as strangers. But it is not so that God sees. For we see each with a difference; but He, looking within, sees we are alike.

SOLDAN. How alike?

FRANCIS. In heart we are alike, Soldan.

SOLDAN. Canst thou be sure of that?

FRANCIS. Since God made us to the same end, that we might serve Him.

SOLDAN. I serve not thy God, Christian!

FRANCIS. Many *do* serve Him, not knowing.

SOLDAN. The service which I do is—different.

FRANCIS. Many wait on *thee,* Soldan, whose services are different. But for each there is a place, and all labour to one end. So thou and I,—serving God.

SOLDAN. What if I serve God by slaying thee?

FRANCIS. Even so as, when good servants are hasty, platters get broken. Yet if thou break this poor platter, God shall pardon thee; and thou wilt still serve Him, though how I know not.

SOLDAN. And what says the platter, when it is broken?

FRANCIS. I am willing to be broken, great King, if it makes thee more careful of others. Many hast thou broken, and little

good has it done thee. Peace comes not yet; and all thy breakings shall not bring it thee.

SOLDAN. Swordsman, draw! [*The* SWORDSMAN *draws his sword, and stands ready.*] Emirs, Councillors, Judges, Servants of the Prophet, ye have heard this man and what he saith. How say ye? Is he innocent or guilty?

ALL. Guilty, O King.

SOLDAN. Unto what penalty?

ALL. Death.

SOLDAN. His offence?

COUNCILLOR. Great Soldan, this man is a dog and a blasphemer. Against thee, Sword of the Prophet, he hath said evil things, denying thy kingship and power. Also against our holy faith he hath spoken falsely.

SOLDAN. What saith the Prophet concerning him?

COUNCILLOR. That all Infidels must perish.

SOLDAN. Even so, let it be. Swordsman, hither. Have ready thy sword. Make the prisoner to kneel down. [FRANCIS *kneels.* BROTHER ILLUMINATO *kneels also, looking toward* FRANCIS *with a face full of joy.*] Brother Ant, I have heard thee. Hast thou said all thou wouldst say? . . . If not, now speak!

FRANCIS. O Soldan, while I have breath needs must I plead. For I have short life, and little wisdom, and my tongue is feeble. But He, whose messenger I am, is almighty, and infinite, and eternal; and His glory is not as the glory of kings,—being without end. So, if I begin to tell of it, how may I finish?

SOLDAN [*pointing to an hour-glass beside him, the sands of which are nearly run*]. A little time I yet give thee. While the sands in this glass still run, speak on!

FRANCIS [*stretching out his arms*]. As the sun be the King's reign! The wisdom of God be thy rule: the love of God thy possession: the Peace of God, which passeth all understanding, be with thee, Soldan, when thou also comest to die!

SOLDAN [*to the* SWORDSMAN]. Man, put up thy sword!

Loose him: and go! Take with you that other prisoner: do no harm to him. Councillors and Judges, what I do now, I do of myself. Go, all of you! [*They all go out. The* SOLDAN *remains seated, with* FRANCIS *kneeling before him.*] Brother, come hither. . . . Sit near me. . . . Through all the world I have sought thee. Now, in the Camp of mine enemy, I find thee! Oh, wherefore didst thou come?

FRANCIS. To be thy lover and servant, Soldan.

SOLDAN. That is well: I have great need of thee. In my service thou shalt have power, and riches, and great honour; for I will exalt thee, and make thee a ruler; also thou shalt be taught the truths of our holy faith, and become a believer.

FRANCIS. That cannot be, Soldan. Power is of God, not of kings. Serving all, I rule none, and naught have I of possessions save Poverty. . . . Disband thine armies, Soldan. Fight not against the living God. Sheathe thy sword, and possess thy land in peace.

SOLDAN. Peace? Who offers peace?

FRANCIS. He against whom thou fightest, Soldan.

SOLDAN. 'Tis of thy God thou speakest? Say then: [*he rises*] and speak truth! If I seek Him in the Camp of mine enemies—shall I find Him? [FRANCIS *bows his head, for it is a question he dares not answer.*]

FRANCIS. Seek Him in thine own heart, Soldan. There shalt thou find peace.

SOLDAN. Thou hast answered well. . . . And yet thou art still one of them!

FRANCIS. I came to them a traveller from my own land, Soldan.

SOLDAN. To fight for them?

FRANCIS. Aye: even as I have fought for thee, saying the same words: "Disband your armies; fight not against God; sheathe your sword; go back to your own land in peace."

SOLDAN. And they?

FRANCIS. They were like the ants, Soldan—very full of themselves.

SOLDAN. Not heeding thee?

FRANCIS. No man can heed that which he sees not—neither with eyes nor with heart.

SOLDAN [*with a touch of the visionary*]. What, then, have *I* seen? . . . Nay, I know not. Yet to my ears hath come a voice. [*The torches and the* TORCHBEARERS *have gone; and the only light now in the tent is the lamp which burns above the dais.* SOLDAN *sits in thought; and for a while there is silence. Presently, as the voice of his reverie,* FRANCIS *begins speaking.*]

FRANCIS. Look, Soldan, how bright in this tent shines the light! See, on walls, and roof, and armour, and jewels, how it glitters. But yonder at the door stands night, and thou seest naught of it,—neither the beauty, nor the spaces of heaven which lie over it, nor the stars which are contained there. Because this light has made a covering to thine eyes, therefore do the heavens look dark. [FRANCIS *has risen, and stands looking out into the night.*] O Soldan, in thine own heart seek wisdom! The flame of Kingship and power is brief, and short-reaching, and by a breath it is put out. And with it shall depart the honour and fear and obedience and service which men render thee. These go, but thou remainest. Then, as a sleeper, that awakens when the lamp in his chamber is quenched, sees the door (which was darkness) changed to a window of light, and with his eyes searches the night, beholding the great spaces of heaven, and the stars that are hung in it, so in that day shalt thou see the standing of thy soul, and the home of thy inheritance to which thou travellest. [*The* SOLDAN *has risen, and coming down from the dais, he stands beside* FRANCIS.] God is great, and infinite, and full of compassion. Thou art but a little thing: yet in His hand He holdeth and loveth thee. O Soldan, in that day of thine awakening, remember me, thy little lover and servant, and pray for me!

SOLDAN [*drawing him to the light*]. Come; aye, closer; for again would I look upon thy face, and know more of thee. . . . [*They stand eye to eye under the lamp, silent awhile.*] Well said, Brother Ant. When I come to die, I shall remember thee. [*He mounts the dais, strikes a bell, and puts out the lamp.*

The night grows luminous without. Presently in the doorway two ATTENDANTS *are seen standing motionless.*] There is thy road: there is thy star, and thy heaven! Go, thou art freer than I. Alas, that in my Kingdom never shall I see thee again.

FRANCIS. In the Kingdom of God, Brother, I pray that I shall see thee.

SOLDAN. There, when thou comest, look for me in thine own heart. If thou find me, there shall I be.

FRANCIS. Amen, Soldan. So—if God will!

SOLDAN. Take this signet, show it to the Captain of the Guard. Let him give command that thou and thy companion return in safety—to the Camp of mine enemy.

FRANCIS. Alas, then, for peace have I failed!

SOLDAN. Who knows! . . . Farewell, Brother Ant.

FRANCIS. Farewell, great and gracious King, Brother-servant of my Lord! [FRANCIS *goes out, followed, at a signal from the* SOLDAN, *by the two* ATTENDANTS. *The* SOLDAN *stands looking after him.*]

SOLDAN. Farewell, Brother Sun. [*From outside comes the cry of the* MUEZZIN *calling the faithful to prayer:* "There is one God, Allah, and Mahomet is his Prophet!" *The* SOLDAN *bares his feet, stands looking toward Mecca, and prays.*]

[CURTAIN.]

TO TEACHERS

This is the first collection of plays that has been made especially for use in the ninth year of the school course. Perhaps, therefore, a few words in regard to the aims of the work and concerning the methods to be employed in teaching drama to young people of this grade may not be out of place.

It is not expected that any one class will necessarily read all the plays in this book. So generous a selection has been offered in order to meet the widely differing tastes, abilities, and preparation of various groups of students, boys and girls, city and country children. The editor believes that, as a rule, not more than a half dozen of the plays should be taken up in class. The others should provide the class with recreative home reading.

Plays that require the building up of a background, like Stephen Phillips's *Ulysses,* Laurence Housman's *Brother Sun,* Frank Bett's *The Passing of Sinfiotli,* or Clifford Bax's *Square Pegs,* should be studied and discussed in class in the same way that other pieces of literature, classic, modern, or contemporary, are handled. The fallacy persists in some schools that play books are for the public speaking or elocution department exclusively, not for the English class room. A collection of plays like the present one or like the earlier collections of the same editor are to be used in the study of English just as volumes of short stories, of essays, or of speeches are used. The study of plays, modern as well as classic, is commonly included in the English course of study nowa-

days, for the several purposes of interesting young people in good plays, helping them make the connection between drama and healthful community recreation, adding to their general culture, and giving them an added zest in the printed play and in the theatre.

In general, much dictionary and reference work has been done for the students of this book in the brief introductions. The word lists should be mastered *before* the play is assigned for reading, so that drudgery and dramatic literature may be disassociated. The method of teaching a modern play differs in some important respects from that employed in teaching Shakespearian drama. By contrast, too, the technique of contemporary playwrights is more easily grasped and applied to simple problems of dramatization; the modern play is less difficult to interpret and act than a classic because there are fewer obstacles in the way of language; the child has the satisfaction of knowing that he is reading a type of literature that is in the ascendant in the world to-day; and he has the further satisfaction of coming to critical decisions of his own in respect to plays around which the mosses of traditional opinion have had no time to gather.

After a few weeks spent in the study of plays by the methods suggested in this book, the teacher trained to observe carefully may know which of her pupils have literary tendencies, which have a healthy and which a perverted sense of humor, and which, as they grow up, will turn to literature, as criticism of society. The study of plays will reveal further how boys and girls relate themselves to community work, what special talents they possess in the various arts auxiliary to the drama, and whether there lurks in the class any one endowed with a single spark, however small, of the " divine fire."

It is plain that the study of modern plays is absolutely in line with the long recognized principle of proceeding from the known to the unknown, and that this study does really help to reveal the possibilities in such " major fields of learning " as the drama and its allied arts.

The editor offers the following concrete suggestions in regard to supplementary work on two of the plays:

Through the reading of *Ulysses,* the subject of Greek mythology, taught generally in the schools as a background for the study of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey,* can be reviewed under new circumstances and with a fresh set of associations. At least one of Shakespeare's plays is read in the eighth or ninth year. A beginning in the study of poetic drama, as a type, and in the survey of the course of its history will thus have been made that may be further pursued in connection with *Ulysses.*

Correlation with the art work of the students by means of a scrutiny of ancient vase designs illustrating the episodes of the *Odyssey,* and of Flaxman's drawings or similar objects, should certainly take place. Dramatization of suitable Greek myths may be practiced as part of the work on *Ulysses.* Specially interested students may want, for example, to compare their original dramatization of the story of Alcestis with the ancient Greek play on that subject by Euripides or with Laurence Housman's dramatic treatment of the same story.

The study of *The Passing of Sinfiotli* will offer opportunity for a new presentation of the significant myths of the Norsemen, taught often in the earlier years of the elementary school course. There are three ways in which the teacher can vitalize these Northern stories for students in the ninth year: First, there are repeated references to the Volsungs and their wild adventures in

easy English texts, and these can be used freely. Second, the Music Department should be asked to furnish illustrative passages from Wagner's operas on the ring of the Niebelungs. And, third, the myths of the Norsemen should be used for purposes of class dramatization. (See Evelyn Smith's book recommended for supplementary reading.)

The teacher will find two of the more recent books in the field extremely suggestive in connection with " dramatization." They are: Percival Wilde, *The Craftsmanship of the One-Act Play,* Boston, 1923, and F. C. Happold, *Two Plays from the Perse School and An Introduction on Dramatic Teaching in the Schools, Cambridge,* 1921.

Whenever teachers and people of the theatre, playwrights, actors, managers, and designers, foregather to discuss the place and purpose of the study of drama in the schools, they come inevitably, it seems, to the same conclusion. The function of the teacher, it is always agreed, is to build up a *discriminating audience,* not in order to swell box office receipts, but to increase rather the sum total of beauty in the world.

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